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3 vols

Maxwell

MY LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“STORIES OF WATERLOO,” “WILD SPORTS OF THE WEST,”
&c. &c. &c.

Sir Anthony.—Come here, sirrah! who the devil are you?

Captain Absolute.—’Faith! sir, I’m not quite clear myself: but I’ll endeavour to recollect.

The Rivals.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1835

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INTRODUCTION.

Egeon.—Why look you strange on me? You know me well.

Ant. E.—I never saw you in my life till now.

Comedy of Errors.

I HAD been delicate from infancy—and the enervating effects of an unhealthy climate obliged me to retire upon half-pay, and quit Ceylon for England, to try if native air would restore a shattered constitution. I came to London for medical advice; and while my physician was anxious that I should continue immediately under his eye, he recommended me, for amusement and exercise, to make frequent excursions around the British capital.

No advice could have been more congenial to “a truant disposition.” I, who had been buffeted about the world from my boyhood, willingly became a roamer after health; and in

the vicinity of the metropolis there were few spots unvisited in the course of my valetudinary wanderings.

Every suburban retirement—every scene of holiday dissipation—every signboard which a Cockney treasures in the tablet of his memory, is familiar to me. I have spent weeks upon the river and the road, became resident in steam-boats and stages, witnessed many an adventure, consorted with strange companions, and became extensively acquainted with the whole family of man.

It was a sultry day, and I was sitting in the bay-window of the Pier Hotel at Gravesend, contemplating the unceasing bustle that Father Thames presented. The steamer was to return to town at five, and I rang the bell to order dinner, and thus fill up an interval of two mortal hours. The gentleman of the napkin appeared, produced his *carte*, and eulogized the contents of the larder,—for there, as he averred, everything eatable in August would be found. He added, that dinner was just being served at the *table d'hôte* below ; and probably, rather than dine *tout seul*, I would prefer uniting

myself to the party. Undoubtedly I would. I seized my hat and cane, and following as true a descendant of Hal's "Francis," as ever "served a long lease to the clinking of pewter," entered the public room and joined the company.

The party amounted to a dozen, of whom a moiety were of the gentler sex. All, with one exception, were denizens of Cockayne and inhabitants of the Modern Babylon. They were all and every, no doubt, "good men and true;" of excellent reputation upon 'Change, and exemplary in their private relations; cherishing their wives, and correcting their children, as became citizens of character and credit. The ladies were fat and comely, and one of them positively handsome. She was a fine, joyous, laughter-loving dame, with teeth exquisitely white and the blackest eyes in Bishopsgate-street. I saw her steal from beneath her pink silk bonnet an *espiègle* glance at the stranger; and then, probably checked by the proximity of her liege lord, she turned her eyes demurely on the tablecloth.

Mr. Hopkins, when he espoused one so young and pretty as her of the pink bonnet, was cer-

tainly a bold man. He might easily have had an older daughter; and was moreover a short and bilious gentleman, neither in face nor figure designed by Nature for a lady-killer. If it be true that men in this life are sometimes by the agency of their helpmates qualified for a state of beatitude above, I should conclude, from the looks of his lady, that Mr. H. was certain of a place in heaven.

I mentioned that one of the party was a stranger to the rest. He was a tall, stout, devil-may-care, dark-whiskered fellow: I never heard a more decided brogue—I never met a wilder-looking gentleman. He was fashionably dressed, apparently on excellent terms with himself, and dying to be very intimate with the rest of the company. He placed himself *vis-à-vis* to the fair citizen; and, more than once, I detected a furtive glance stealing underneath the pink bonnet when Mr. Hopkins was otherwise engaged.

Dinner proceeded: the citizens ate gallantly—the stranger rattled on—graciously the pink dame smiled—and all were occupied according to their respective fancies. Mrs. Hopkins was

indubitably “ a fine animal ;” but—may the Lord pardon her !—she used a knife with fish, and swilled “ bottled stout ” like a Life Guardsman.

When people are limited in time, it is marvellous how expeditiously they contrive to get on. I never met a company who drank fairer : sherry disappeared, brandy and *blue ruin* succeeded ; the day was hot—the ladies thirsty : all had come out “ on pleasure bent,” and hilarity was the order of the day. Mr. Hopkins’s cheek was losing its lemon tint insensibly, and acquiring the true *couleur de rose* ; and I fancied that his wife’s eyes every moment became blacker and brighter. Alas ! it was a sun-gleam before a tempest. Suddenly, he bounded from his seat like a racket-ball, and, with a deep imprecation, declared vengeance against my next neighbour, the wild-looking gentleman.

Up rose the company *en masse*. They were all married, and therefore made common cause. There was a deceiver in the room—a Giovanni in the presence—for the stranger, not contented with looking “ things unutterable,” had actually attempted to establish a pedal communication

with her of the pink bonnet ; and, confound his awkwardness ! he pressed the wrong foot.

It was unpardonable in the wild-looking gentleman. I felt for Mr. Hopkins. Had the delinquent trodden upon my toe, he would have been my destroyer ; for I was afflicted with tight shoes and angry corns.

Never did a company appear more unanimous in denouncing a deceiver. At the audacious attempt the gentlemen were irate ; and at the bungling execution the ladies were indignant—no wonder ! If people will press feet, let them tread upon the right ones.

All and every assumed a hostile attitude, and assault and battery appeared to be the order of the day. An irritated drysalter from Tooley-street commenced buttoning his coat—and the whole corps seemed to be combining their efforts for a general onslaught.

Nor was the wild-looking gentleman insensible to coming events. I never saw a person more disinclined to submit quietly to martyrdom ; and, seizing the poker, he bade a bold defiance to his assailants. The thickest skull has but a sorry chance against “ cold iron ;” and

none of the angry citizens, although doubtless men of approved courage, volunteered to lead the assault. I took advantage of the lull, offered my mediation, and the stranger was permitted to explain. The offence was perfectly accidental—a cramp caused the mischief—Mr. Hopkins was appeased, harmony restored, and a fresh supply of liquids promptly ordered and produced.

How long the armistice would continue unbroken, I did not pretend to guess. The steamer's bell sounded its note of preparation; Cockneys by the dozen flocked on board; the paddles revolved briskly, and I went splashing up to town, leaving the wild-looking gentleman to "complete his destinies."

Months passed; autumn was over, and a murky atmosphere with drizzling rain told that it was a London November. I was returning from dinner to my lodgings, when, at the corner of a dark mews, I was hustled by several men, who commenced a simultaneous research into my pockets. Unluckily, I had that evening more cash upon my person than I felt inclined to part with, and accordingly

offered a sturdy resistance. But it would have been unavailing, had not a stranger suddenly crossed the street and hurried to the rescue. He was indeed a powerful ally : down went a couple of the Philistines—off ran the rest, and I escaped spoliation. I turned to thank my deliverer, and in the stout stranger recognized my quondam friend, the wild-looking gentleman !

Nor had I been forgotten : he recognized my voice, tucked me under his arm, and we proceeded to a neighbouring tavern. We supped, and over a midnight glass I recalled to his memory the dinner at Gravesend, and asked him how he had subsequently progressed. He smiled, and informed me he had found favour in the sight of Mr. Hopkins, accompanied that party to town, and had been invited to visit them in Bishopsgate-street. In my opinion Mr. Hopkins was wrong.

We remained in conversation until a late hour. My friend was leaving London next day, but promised to find me out on his return. We separated, he having presented me with his card, on which was engraven “ Captain John Blake.”

Spring came, and I had heard nothing of my deliverer, when one morning, in "The Times," I saw his marriage regularly gazetted; and, joyful intelligence! it was declared that the lady of his love was passing fair, and rich as an Israelite. After an elaborate account of the dresses and *déjeûné*, it was further intimated, that the happy pair had returned to town, and were now resident at Ibbotson's. And had the wild-looking gentleman actually become a Benedict, and an heiress committed her happiness to his custody? My curiosity was roused—I longed to learn the history of his good fortune from himself; it would be but civil to offer my congratulations; and, next day, I drove to Vere-street, and sent up my card.

My friend was out, but the servant informed me that his lady was *visible*. I was paraded to the drawing-room, announced as an old acquaintance, and found myself in the presence of the loveliest girl, that ever vowed obedience at the altar.

I have during my march through life gazed on many a beauty, but never did I view a sweeter expression of artless loveliness, than the

bride's face presented when she blushingly received my congratulations. In conversation she was easy and intelligent, and before a quarter of an hour I came to a conclusion, that matrimony may be endured; and that in the lottery of life the wild-looking gentleman possessed, as they say in Connaught, "the luck of thousands."

Our *tête-à-tête* was so agreeable, that time slipped on unnoticed. I heard the door unclose, and observed the bride's eyes lighten, as she said in a soft voice, "It is my husband." I sprang up to welcome my fortunate friend; but in a moment started back in dismay—I had caught a stranger by the hand, and intruded, under false pretences, upon the privacy of a gentleman to whom I was entirely unknown.

I never found myself in a more embarrassing situation, and attempted, of course, a blundering apology, while the stranger politely requested me to sit down. It was, indeed, a ridiculous mistake. In name and rank there was certainly a strange coincidence; while, stranger still, in age and personal appearance, the Benedict of Ibbotson's might pass as twin-brother to the admirer of Mrs. Hopkins.

I noticed this singularity.

“ And may I ask,” said the stranger, “ where you met this duplicate of mine ?”

I told him.

“ How might he have been engaged on these occasions ?”

“ On the first, in making love ; on the second, in threshing pickpockets.”

“ I fancy I know your friend,” said the stranger. “ Would you favour me with the particulars of these adventures ?”

I consented ; and during the recital he laughed immoderately, while the bride appeared to be equally amused.

“ Well, sir,” he observed, when my narrative was ended, “ your acquaintance is in truth “ my loving cousin”—one who in name and resemblance is said to be my counterpart, but whom, I suppose either for sake of distinction, or from his superior vivacity, it has pleased his associates to designate as ‘ Jack the Devil.’ ”

I groaned ;—the identity was proven, and the *sobriquet* indubitably belonged to my worthy friend, the wild-looking gentleman.

“ Good God !” I exclaimed, “ how stupid and

unpardonable must this intrusion of mine appear !”

“ Far from it,” said the bridegroom; “ I have heard of you repeatedly from my kinsman; and Colonel ——’s name is quite familiar to Emily and me. Will you waive ceremony, and break our matrimonial *tête-à-tête* ? and after dinner I will give you the last intelligence which has reached me of our excellent countryman, ‘ Jack the Devil ! ’ ”

Little inducement was requisite to make me accept his invitation; and from that day, I date the commencement of a friendship that promises only to terminate with life. I have been for months together domesticated with my friends, and, during morning rides and evening potations, collected those details of personal adventure, which, *mutato nomine*, and with slight omissions, the following memoir so faithfully records.

LONDON, MARCH 1835.

MY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

MY BIRTH.

King Henry. Is the queen delivered?

Say, aye ; and of a boy.

Lady. Aye, aye, my liege ;

And of a lovely boy.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was a wild and blustrous night in the month of February, in the year of Grace one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine—The jail-clock struck one. My father's household had long since retired to their respective dormitories, and a solitary watch-light twinkled in the chamber-window where my mother slept. All was quiet as a regular sou-wester would permit. Doors creacked, windows rattled, while the wind, eddying in hollow gusts through nar-

row lanes and gateways, came roaring awfully down the chimneys. There were no passengers abroad, for the foul weather had cleared the streets effectually of their usual gang of nocturnal wanderers; and the veriest drunkard appeared to have anticipated the storm, and managed to stagger home before the fury of the gale was at its height. The ancient elms which overhung the road leading from the barracks to the jail, groaned fearfully above the picket, as with great coats buttoned to their noses, they hurried to their guard-room from patrolling—the sentries kept snug within their boxes—and in all Castlebar but one man could have been discovered out of doors, and he, as it will appear, was a dead one.

Just then, a figure might have been observed moving hastily across my mother's chamber. Presently the bell rang; the warning peal was repeated; a loud and peremptory voice aroused the sleeping servants; and, without even waiting to bless himself, Mark Haggarty slipped on his red-plush breeches, tumbled over a turf-creel, which the housemaid, for better convenience, had judiciously laid across the passage, and as

he gathered himself up, in tones which told how desperately he was alarmed, ejaculated, "Blessed Virgin ! is the house coming down ?"

"The mistress is ill," exclaimed my father. "Run for Doctor Donovan. Take the short way across the Mall, and be back again like lightning."

"Why then, by my own soul, I wont," returned he of the red-plush breeches. "*Me* crass the Mall, and Kimlin swinging on a tree ! *Mona mondiaoul*,* if I would take a hatfull of pound-notes and venture. But I'll cut round the lane and raise the doctor in a jiffy."

Accordingly, without waiting for his other habiliments, Mark Haggarty bolted out of the door, and started at a killing pace, upholding with his better hand, the solitary garment by the waistband.

Meanwhile the whole establishment was in general commotion. Half-a-score of domestics, male and female, in that interesting and unadorned state when beauty is said to be most bewitching, careered over the house, and tilted against each other in the lobbies. The men

* An Irish imprecation.

cursed, and the women crossed themselves ; lights flared, dogs barked, boys kicked them for the same, and the uproar within, beat the storm without, all to nothing. At this moment Mark Haggarty returned "fairly kilt wid runnin," to announce the advent of the doctor, so soon as Biddy Boyle, his favourite hand-maiden, could manage "to shake him into his clothes."

Let critics say what they please, in the best biographies, digressions will be frequent ; and even at this eventful period I must leave my mother to her fate, while I put my readers in possession of certain matters, which I deem necessary to illustrate and connect these memoirs.

Every body who is aware that this history commences in 1799, will recollect that the rebellion had occurred during the preceding summer, and that although the insurrection had been suppressed, the country was still fearfully disturbed, and especially by ruffians who had been in arms with the disaffected, and who, having been excluded from mercy by their crimes, had still contrived to elude the hand of justice, and exist by terrorism and plunder. At this time martial-law was in full force ; Denis

Browne reigned in undisputed supremacy ; his sway over the north-western division of the kingdom of Connaught was absolute, as if he had formed an integral fraction of the Holy Alliance ; and his autocracy over “ the finest peasantry on earth,” not inferior even to that of Mr. Daniel O’Connell, whom God long preserve ! With the persons and properties of his subjects Denis took occasional liberties, loosing and binding as he pleased—and when example was thought preferable to precept, hanging a delinquent “ out of the face,” for the general benefit of the body politic. True it is, that in after days, short-sighted politicians have questioned the utility of the gallows, and even mooted the authority of the defunct Denis to employ it as he did. But these important questions are not for us to decide, and we shall consign them accordingly to the future historian.

Three days before the opening of this story, an occurrence took place which procured for the worthy citizens of Castlebar the unexpected pleasure of witnessing an execution. An outlaw named Kimlin, who had escaped the general slaughter which visited the rebel allies when

the French surrendered at Ballinamuck, had infested the country for the last winter at the head of a numerous and ferocious band. He was a daring, desperate scoundrel—and, rendered confident by his previous success in evading the many attempts that had been made to arrest him, imprudently ventured within a short distance of the town, and appeared at a bridal dance which was given in a neighbouring village. As a reward of one hundred pounds had been offered for his apprehension, it is not surprising that his propinquity to the town was speedily communicated, and a few of the yeomanry, having ascertained the house where he would harbour for the night, marched hastily to the spot, and surrounded and attacked it. Although surprised, Kimlin made a desperate resistance : the leader of the party was shot through the heart, two others severely wounded, and it was not until the house was in flames and the outlaw's ammunition expended, that he could be overpowered and secured. Tied upon a car, with the dead yeoman placed beside him, Kimlin was conveyed by his captors in triumph to Castlebar. The party proceeded directly with their pri-

soner to the court-house, where Denis Browne was at the moment sitting in judgment, upon a broken head incurred at a recent hurling match.

When the important event was communicated to the autocrat of Mayo, that the felon who had evaded pursuit so long was at last within his power, the hurlers, plaintiff and defendant, were most unceremoniously ejected from the bar of justice. Kimlin, pinioned and guarded by a yeoman with a naked bayonet at either side, was placed at the foot of the table, directly opposite to the arm-chair where Denis Browne was seated; the dead body was deposited outside in the lobby; and one of the captors desired to state briefly the particulars of the morning adventure.

While this ceremony was proceeding, Kimlin, with a dogged resolution, listened in sullen silence to his accuser. The detail ended, Denis turning upon the undaunted felon a look that would have quailed the stoutest heart, demanded to know the names and haunts of his companions. But the robber spoke not, and met the eye of his judge with a scowl of deadly hatred.

“Dost thou hear me, ruffian? Answer at once, and truly, or before the sun is at its height you shall dangle on yonder tree,” and he pointed to a tall elm, whose bare and ragged boughs were visible from the court-house window.

Kimlin looked up; it was a look that united fiendish scorn with unflinching desperation.

“Not so fast, Right Honourable,”* said the robber with a sneer: “you’ll bring me to the drum-head, I suppose, at any rate—and, with all your hurry, you’ll scarcely strap me up till sunset. As to my comrades, they are who they are; and for their haunts, why, look till ye find them, and then you’ll not have lost the labour.”

The judge smiled bitterly. “Think ye, friend,” he replied, “that a murderer and armed rebel, with the blood of the king’s trusty soldiers on his hands, shall cumber the earth till he undergoes the forms of law intended for better regulated subjects?” He paused, and, taking out his watch, examined the dial attentively, and whispered the jailor beside him, who directly left the room; then, in a voice as cold

* The title by which Denis was universally known.

and passionless as if he was ordering his carriage to the door, he thus continued : “ Kim-lin, it wants five minutes to eleven ; at twelve you dangle upon yonder elm,” and he pointed with his finger to the tree.

“ Devil may care !” replied the undaunted ruffian : “ will ye let me have a priest ?”

His wish was granted, and a messenger despatched for the confessor. In a few minutes, and by different doors, two functionaries entered the chamber, and placed themselves at either side of the doomed murderer.

The first of these was an old grey-haired man, whose coat of dingy black, and long coarse horse-skin boots, announced him to be a travelling friar. He crossed himself while addressing the prisoner, and muttered to him from time to time some Latin formulæ, interspersed with admonitory observations, inculcating the necessity of speedy repentance, and the making of his peace with God.

The other was a very different personage. He was a tall negro, with a face of amazing ugliness, and frame of gigantic proportions. His dress was of that peculiar and remarkable

costume with which the time-beaters in military bands are generally invested. He had large rings in his ears, and a crooked sabre at his side, while his turban or cap, formed of red and yellow calico, added at least eighteen inches to his height. But, striking as his dress and figure were, on one thing the undivided observation of the spectators was directed—and that was a small coil of rope which he carried in his hand, having one end simply knotted, while the other was provided with an eye, spliced with a neatness that told the negro had been once a sailor.

“Sambo,” said the judge, with an encouraging nod, “we require a cast of your craft this morning; and, like a good and provident workman, you have not forgotten your tools.”

The negro’s lips divided, and his grin disclosed a set of teeth firm and white as the tusks of a boar-hound.

“Hegh, massa! me alway ready; but rope has broke a strand;” and, pointing out the frayed part, he directed a careless look to the convict, who had retired to a corner with the

confessor—"Me want new rope; him there not tall, but dam heavy."

"It will do, Sambo—it will do;" said the justice, with a smile.

"But," returned the executioner, "Massa Browne, me not paid last job. Him jailor there, him dam rogue; him promise a one pound-note, besides the clothes."

"Ay, Snowball," replied the accused, "and did ye not get every rag that Conolly had on, with every thing in the pockets, and that into the bargain?"

"Hegh, hegh!" and the sable functionary grinned; "great matter that! Him had not'ing in him pocket but thread and thimble; him clothes not worth a broken drum-stick—all tore, though himself was a tailor. Beside, this here a dam place. No one will buy dead man's clothes, for fear him ghost come at night to claim them:" and Sambo laughed heartily, in which the judge and jailor joined.

While this conversation was carried on at the table, the felon and the churchman were busily employed in the corner of the room. Between religious exercises, the friar was en-

deavouring to extract a confession, which Kimlin appeared to make reluctantly, as his replies were given in hasty and querulous tones.

“Did I not tell ye I was there already?” was his answer to the priest’s question.

Again the friar whispered—“No,” returned the convict, “Connor, that was hung in Foxford, fired the shot that killed him.”

“Who murdered Peter Donovan?” said the confessor.

“How do I know? I was in Roscommon the night it happened.”

“You fired at Mr. O’Roark,” observed the priest.

“Well, if I did, I missed him—and more ’s the pity.”

“Were you not at Marley’s robbery?” asked the friar.

“Arrah! ye bother one wid questionin’—I was, and I ’ll tell ye no more!”

“Well, attend to me,” replied the friar; “are ye sorry for your crimes, and do ye heartily repent?”

“I ’ll tell ye what I repent most,” said the villain with a ferocious oath; “and that is,

that I had'nt more cartridges, and, by ——, I would have shot as many of them blood-hounds," and he pointed to the yeomen, "as would have covered that table, and it's a long one—and, now will ye give me the rites?"

"I'll give you *the rope!*" exclaimed the judge, who had overheard the sanguinary declaration—"Away with him at once; and before twelve strikes, let me see him strapped up!"

Immediately the captors seized the prisoner, and the black drummer resumed his coil, which he had deposited on the table.

"Massa Browne," said the sable artist, "mind, two poun' due now; me come back for money when the job done—me have child to cristin—him beauty—black as a crow—colour of him father—him beauty:" and Sambo showed his white tusks as he laughed heartily. At the door the convict paused, turned on the judge a look of undying hatred—"May my curse light upon you and yours, Denis Browne!" he ejaculated; then clenching his teeth together, without murmuring another word, he doggedly accompanied his escort.

The look and imprecation were not lost on the person to whom they were addressed. They produced no other effect, however, than eliciting a bitter and sarcastic smile; and in ten minutes, Denis Browne was calmly contemplating from his window the agonized struggles of the expiring robber.

It was determined that the body should be suspended for several days, as a wholesome example to the "mauvais sujets" of the neighbourhood; and, accordingly a manifesto to that effect was issued by the "Right Honourable." Aware that Kimlin's gang were in the vicinity of the town, and that they would naturally wish to remove their deceased leader, precautionary measures were adopted to protect the corpse against any attempt at abstraction. As the Mall was directly opposite the jail, of course the fatal tree was visible to the sentries round the prison. It was, therefore, intimated to the guard, that Mr. Kimlin was placed under their especial *surveillance*, and that to the living criminals beneath their charge, they had received the addition of a dead one.

Three days passed, and every thing went on

as usual. Mayo was minus a robber, and Sambo richer by two pound-notes and a suit of clothes. Kimlin ceased to be a lion—the maid-servants were tired of admiring him—and there was not a nurse for miles around, who had not gratified her infant charge with an exhibition of the departed murderer. To Sambo alone the sight was still an interesting one, and this was from a pardonable vanity. Every evening, at tattoo, while exercising the large drum, as he passed underneath the tree that bore his handy-work, he grinned as he looked up, and remarked to the mulatto who operated on the tambourine beside him, “Hegh, Bill, him robber well hung; dam good hemp too, or two strands would never hold so big a villain up:” and his vigorous stick would descend with additional force upon the sheep-skin. Enough for example had now been done; and it was decided that, on the next day, Kimlin should be committed to his mother earth.

We have already described the evening as stormy. At midnight the gale was awful, and the sentries, as they peered from their boxes, could occasionally observe through the gloom,

the body of the dead outlaw oscillating wildly back and forward in every blast of wind. Within the prison, the jail-guard were circled round a blazing turf fire ; yet it was in truth a cold and dreary watch ; and Sergeant O'Tool feeling an unusual chilliness of the stomach, despatched private Rafferty to procure some whiskey to correct the same, precisely at the moment when the accoucheur departed from his house, hurrying to the assistance of my mother.

Now, Doctor Donovan was well skilled in pharmacy and obstetrics—but, moreover, he was an adept in freemasonry, and a worthy professor of that ancient and honourable craft. That night he had presided over “the enlightened few,” and whether obnubilated by the arcana of the mysterious science, confused by Mark Haggarty’s alarm, or bothered by the storm, he could never himself discover ; but certain it is, that totally oblivious of Mr. Kimlin being suspended in the Mall, he took the short cut, which he of the red-plush breeches had so judiciously avoided.

Before the doctor sallied forth, Biddy Boyle, to the best of her abilities, endeavoured to

secure him against the inclemency of the weather. She encased him in a large coat; his face was defended to the very eyes by a shawl; a silk bandana, tied below his chin, prevented his hat from levanting; while a horseman's cloak over all, appeared to set the tempest at defiance.

While the doctor continued under the shelter of the houses, he progressed gallantly, but the corner turned, he then experienced the fury of the gale. Short and corpulent, he presented a square and compact surface to the action of the wind, which, being in nautical *parlance*, "right aft," hurried him along with astonishing velocity. He had reached the centre of the trees, when a squall raised the capes of his cloak suddenly. To stop was impossible. Hoodwinked, he was impelled forward, till striking against a tree, he endeavoured to arrest his course by catching at it. In the attempt he grasped an object—it was a man's leg! Before he could relinquish his hold, a heavy body bore him to the earth, and the dead murderer lay over him.

Private Rafferty succeeded in his mission, having procured a bottle of "the native"

for the especial comfort of his commander. Crossing an angle of the Mall, he cast a hasty glance towards the spot where Kimlin had buffeted the storm, and vainly strained his vision to assure himself that the person of the outlaw was secure. No opaque form, however, presented itself in the partial moon-light. "Holy Virgin ! can this be possible ?" he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes anew ; but the branch that " bore the weight of Antony" was bare and unadorned as any of its kindred boughs. Pat Rafferty, albeit as stout a sentinel " as ever called stand to a true man," was no hero where a dead one was concerned ; he was just as contiguous to the departed patriot as his fancy would require, and accordingly contenting himself with a distant " reconnoissance," he proceeded to the guard-room to deliver at the same time his whiskey and tidings to the superior officer.

"Cead fealteagh !"* exclaimed Sergeant O'Tool, as he eyed the bottle in his comrade's hand : " I niver needed a drap so badly, for I feel as if I had swallowed a snow-ball : give us a gal-

* A word of welcome.

liogue, Patshiene ;”* and presenting a glass, it was filled and discussed with marvellous celerity. “That puts life in a man. Phew ! there’s a squall ! Fresh hands at the bellows, gentlemen. What a swing Kimlin got !”

“The devil a swing,” replied the bottleholder, turning down a bumper in imitation of his worthy commander : “Kimlin has bate a retrate, as sure as my name is Pat Rafferty.”

“Death an nouns ! asy with yee’r jokes,” exclaimed the gallant sergeant.

“Jokes ! By this book”—and here he pressed the bottle reverently to his lips—“there’s not a rag of him on the tree, more than I’m there.”

“*Mona mondiaoul !*” said the sergeant, “we’re ruined, horse and foot ! Corporal, *avourneein*,† run for the sake of Jasus—take a squint outside, and tell us what ye see.”

Short was the corporal’s absence ; and when he returned, the fatal news was certified.

“Och, murder !” said Mr. O’Tool ; “the Right Hanarable will hang us every mother

* Anglice, “A glass-full, Pat.”

† Corporal, darling.

sowl ! Come along some of ye ;” and seizing a lantern, which he lighted, off ran the sergeant, followed by five or six files of the jail guard.

It was a fortunate circumstance for the unlucky accoucheur that the descent of Mr. Kimlin had been so speedily discovered ; and great was the astonishment of Sergeant O'Tool, when he found that in place of one body, he had a second to account for.

“ Blood and thunder, boys ! where did this one drap from ? Why, this ‘ bates Bannagher.’ ” A groan interrupted him. “ Mother of God ! which of thim was that ? ” and he crossed himself. “ Hold the light down. Why, this one’s alive ! Hallo ! dacent man, who the divil are ye ? Lord, how wild he looks ! Phew ! I comprehend it ; he was stalin the corpse. Arrah, bad manners to ye— I’ve done worse before now than put the bay-nit through your carcass.” Another long and hollow groan succeeded. “ He ’s dacently dressed too, the thief of the world ! Lift him ; ” and by main force the doctor was raised to a perpendicular. “ What have ye to say, ye

divil, for this attimpt—Sorra take ye, wantin rob the Right Hanarable—Arrah, who the blazes are ye?”

But before the sergeant could be answered, a recruit lifted the lantern and scrutinized the features of the supposed culprit.

“Holy St. Patrick! can this be Doctor Donovan?” A feeble affirmative was groaned out.

“Oh, thin, it’s larkin ye were, doctor?” said the sergeant. “Arrah, for shame, to pull the crature about, after the tassing and tumbling he has underwint these three days. Go to your warm bed—it’s no night for a steady little man like you to be out upon the batter. Help him home some of ye; for, by my conscience, whether it’s fear or liquor, the devil a leg the man can lay before the other.”

With considerable difficulty Doctor Donovan was carried by the soldiers to his own house, just as Mark Haggerty arrived a second time, to hurry him to attend my mother. One glance at the unlucky accoucheur, satisfied him of the red-plush breeches, that he must seek assistance elsewhere. Having heard a brief and confused narrative of the accident from the guard, Mark

hastened back to my father, who was pacing the hall impatiently.

“Is he coming?” asked the latter.

“He’s kilt,” was the reply. “My curse attend ye, Kimlin!”

Dreadful was the consternation which Mark Haggerty’s intelligence created: all and every, from the cook to the kitchen-maid, crossed themselves devoutly, and aves and paternosters were plentifully ejaculated. And while the butler was despatched to rouse the regimental surgeon, and my father was striving to conjecture by what ingenious device a dead man had contrived to finish a living one, the old nurse-tender shouted from the stair-head that my mother had produced an heir, “and, och, but he’s a born beauty!”

Gentle reader, such were the circumstances attendant on my *entrée* into life; for the nurse’s beauty was myself, your humble servant.

CHAPTER II.

MEMOIR OF MY FATHER.

Says the priest to my parents, ye ugly ould pair,
Arrah, where could you get such a beautiful heir!

Irish Ballad.

How strictly the latter part of this admired distich might have been applicable to myself, modesty will prevent me insinuating; but certainly the former was not so to my parents, for both were young and handsome.

Cæsar Blake (for thus my father was designated) was the descendant of an ancient family, and the youngest of four brothers. The eldest succeeded to ancestral dignities and estates, and had been duly indoctrinated in fox-hunting and field-sports, electioneering, drinking, and duelling; in short, in all those accomplishments which, for time immemorial, have been consi-

dered by the best authorities, the sole end for which Irish gentlemen were originally created. The second was a field-officer in the Austrian service. The third held a command in the Spanish marine. The fourth, my father, entered the British army when a boy, where he attained the rank of major.

Cæsar Blake was a general favourite with his regiment, which, though a flashy corps, was in no way remarkable for strictness in its discipline. The men were chiefly Irish, and consequently there were among them not a few of that description, known among soldiers by the title of "the king's bad bargains." The officers were young, wild, and gentlemanly. The colonel, an easy-tempered, good-hearted, hard-drinking veteran, averse to all manner of severity, and of course obnoxious to being imposed upon by the men. Hence the regiment was frequently in scrapes—the officers perpetrating all sorts of mischief, and the men fighting with any who would so far oblige them. Complaints being eternally forwarded to the general of the district, at last the case came under serious consideration at the Horse Guards; and to

abate the evil, it was deemed advisable to remove the old commander, and replace him with a tartar.

But, from his previous services, there was no small difficulty in depriving Colonel Selby of his regiment. Fortunately a staff appointment became vacant, and Colonel Macleod was gazetted to the command of the 18th “vice Selby promoted.”

The veteran parted from his companions in arms with unfeigned regret. To the senior officers he was endeared by many a recollection of “Auld lang syne;” and on the younger he looked with the feelings of a too indulgent father, who forgives juvenile aberrations he should correct, from a mistaken but excusable affection. “My dear boys,” he said, as on the morning of his departure he addressed himself to a group of wild ones, among whom my father was a leader—“be more upon your guard. Remember it is not the ‘old man’ with whom you will have to deal in future. Others may not make allowances for the exuberance of youthful spirits. Be cautious, my darling boys, and when I’m far away, recollect my parting admo-

dition." They did so before long, as the sequel will demonstrate.

Colonel Selby intended quitting the barrack by the back-gate, for his heart was too full to permit his looking at the regiment for the last time with tolerable composure. The men were formed on parade, when their beloved commander was observed issuing from his quarters, leaning on my father's arm. Then a singular scene of military excitement ensued. The soldiers piled their arms, and rushed forward in one wild tumultuary mass. A chair was procured, and the colonel elevated on the shoulders of the tallest of the grenadiers. The band formed in front, and followed by the whole corps, officers and drum-boys, lightbobs and pioneers, women and children, and all the tag-rag and bobtail appertaining to a regiment, they proceeded in glorious confusion round the streets, and passed the inn with deafening cheers, just as the old man's successor stepped from a hackney-chaise.

Whether it was that no enthusiastic tokens of regret had marked the new commander's parting with the regiment he had quitted, cer-

tain it is, that this public demonstration of attachment to his predecessor did not operate favourably on his temper, when afterwards receiving the complimentary visits of his new companions. He was a hard, weather-beaten, thin, tall, bilious Scotsman, who had passed every gradation of service from a drum-boy to the command. He was a teasing martinet, and an unforgiving disciplinarian. A constitutional harshness in temper and appearance was so remarkable, that an Irish corporal, in describing him to a comrade, declared that "he was cut out of a crab-tree, while the carpenter, to get all the knots in the stick, had kept as near the root as possible."

It so happened that an elderly gentlewoman of some property, who had never been seduced into matrimony, resided in the town. She was a personage of goodly size, great hospitality, and inveterate devotion to the card-table. Shortly before Colonel Selby's departure, a feud had broken out between this lady and some juniors of the regiment. She loved loo—they patronized country-dancing—and at her last fête, taking umbrage at the obstinacy with which

she rejected the introduction of a fiddle, they unceremoniously left the room, declaring one and all, that they would stand loo no longer.

This was bad enough in all conscience ; but here the delinquency did not end. Unfortunately, in their “ exit in a huff,” they passed the supper-room. The door was open, the servants otherwise engaged, and the table already covered. This was a tempting sight certainly, and it was hard, at that late hour, to retire fasting. A consultation ensued. To return up-stairs was determined to be “ *infra dignitatem*,” to depart supperless a thing not to be tolerated. The course of action was soon decided—one seized a ham, another chose a turkey, my father adopted a chicken-pie, and a fourth selected a cooper of port. None departed empty-handed ; and so rapidly was the larceny effected, that the delinquents were quietly refreshing themselves with the abstracted property, and taking their ease in the next inn, before the astonished mistress of the house was advertised, that the better moiety of her entertainment had departed with her rebellious guests.

Deep was the indignation of the hostess.

She, one of the Macnamaras of Clare, to be treated with incivility, and that too in her own house, was

“ To beard the lion in his den,
The Douglass in his hall !”

That night she never closed an eye, and early next morning indited a letter to her kinsman Captain Antony O'Dogherty, quondam of the Buffs, to require that he should exact due satisfaction for the injury, and take immediate vengeance on the persons of the offenders. But on reflection, she recollected that honest Antony's pistol-hand had been already damaged in action ; and even were he in full force, he was but one man, and what was that among so many. Legal redress came next under consideration, and her solicitor, Billy Davock, was consulted in form.

Billy was a short, punchy little man, wore a light-coloured scratch-wig, took brown snuff, and was reputed the best opinion in cases of assault and battery, “ this side of Dublin.” He heard the story attentively, took a long and deliberative pinch of high-toast, shook his head, and requested to have the advantage of a night's

reflection,—for which he subsequently introduced an item in his bill, under the denomination of “loss of sleep, 13s. 4d.”

Next morning, Billy Davock visited his fair client right early. He had turned the case over attentively ; and, flagrant as it was, he nevertheless admitted that doubts and dubitations had arisen. Great caution would be necessary in framing the indictment. If Major Cæsar Blake, whom might the Lord mend ! was charged in the counts with stealing the ham, he would escape condign punishment, if he, the major, could satisfy the jury that he had merely purloined the turkey. Beside, the delinquents might prove an alibi. By the evidence of the company, she, Miss Macnamara, it is true, might establish the fact of the said Cæsar, with others named in the indictment, having been on her premises the night of the larceny. But then the barrack-guard would swear any thing they were directed to swear by their officers, as a matter of course. Consequently they, the defendants, would prove, by the affidavits of a sergeant, corporal, and twelve privates, that they had never left the

mess-room. If the prosecution failed, the traversers would have a good action for defamation and loss of character, and heavy damages would be recovered. Under these perplexing circumstances, he, Billy Davock, would advise a case to be submitted to counsel; and he would accordingly, if his client so instructed him, take the opinion of certain persons, whom he enumerated as being learned in the law.

But, on mature consideration, Miss Macnamara, alarmed at the complexity of the case, abandoned all hope of legal redress. She had, she discovered, but one safe remedy against the parties, and that was their eternal exclusion from her card and supper tables.

It is to be lamented that this merciful determination of the injured gentlewoman did not operate upon the offenders as it should. Whether it was that, hardened by impunity, or piqued because at the next entertainment their names were not found among those bidden to the feast, does not appear; but certain it is, that having discussed an additional quantity of old port, they, "*suadente diabolo*," sallied out at mid-

night, to concert and carry on measures of retaliation upon the already sinned against Miss Macnamara.

The house of this persecuted lady was situate in the centre of the town ; yet being, what is in Connaught termed, “a lone woman,” to preserve property and person, it behoved her to have her domicile well secured. Accordingly, the lower windows were defended by iron stanchions that effectually prevented ingress to, or egress from the mansion. Of this the conspirators took advantage: they screwed gimlets silently into the doors and door-posts, front and rear, lashed them together by a stout cord, and thus Miss Macnamara and her guests were illegally deprived of liberty.

This effected, a slater’s ladder was procured from an adjacent yard, a horse-sheet saturated with water, and one of the party, who had been formerly in the navy, mounting the roof clambered to the chimney-top, and effectually choked the funnel by stuffing it with the wet cloth.

All within the mansion was joy and revelry ; supper had ended, and it was, as all admitted, excellent and extensive enough to have made

amply up for the spoliation of its predecessor. The gentlemen were indulging in brandy punch, and the ladies refreshing themselves with port-wine negus. Miss Macnamara, having "cleaned out" the company at loo, was of course in glorious spirits; and Colonel Macleod, who occupied the post of honour beside the hostess, apparently infected by the general hilarity, twisted his saturnine features into what he intended for a smile. A probationer from Maynooth had just favoured the revellers with that celebrated drinking song, intituled, "Jolly mortals, fill your glasses," and a *débutante* from Mrs. Mac Greal's finishing school at Cloonakilty, was arranging her mouth to execute "Will you come to the bower?" — ladies laughed, gentlemen pinched them beneath the table-cloth, fun was the order of the night, care might go hang himself,

"And all went merry as a marriage bell!"

Just then a long continuous volume of dense smoke came rolling down the chimney; "Murder!" cried the chief attendant. "Bad luck to them thieves, the sweeps! they promised to have been here a week ago." Puff, puff, puff,

went the chimney. "Raise the windows!" exclaimed the hostess, who happened to be constitutionally *thick-winded*. Puff, puff, puff—"Holy Virgin! I'm smothered!" ejaculated Captain O'Dowd, who had recently returned to his native town, with a confirmed asthma and increased pension. Puff, puff, puff—"Open the hall door!" roared the priest.

"It's fastened without."

Puff, puff—"Try the back one, for the love of Heaven!"

"It won't open."

The consternation was awful; the company hurried from the supper-room; and the Colonel, who, from a pulmonary infirmity, was necessitated to make a rapid retreat, having inserted his spurs in the table-cloth, removed it, glasses and all, without the assistance of the servants. Death appeared inevitable, and the only reasonable doubt was, whether the coroner would attribute it to fright or suffocation. That nicer etiquette, which in ordinary cases prohibits interviews in bedchambers to all ladies and gentlemen who have not been joined in holy wedlock, was now disregarded, and sufferers of

both sexes might have been discovered in all departments of the establishment, in search of a more endurable atmosphere. At that moment of general distress, a voice from the street exclaimed, "The top of the morning to you, mother Macnamara! Will ye give us 'Jolly mortals' again, if you please."

"It's them thieves of the world from the barrack!" exclaimed the butler. "Open the door and let us out, or, by the eternal frost, I'll swear my life agin yees in the mornin'!" But equally vain would have been threats or solicitations on the blockading party, had not several lanterns been seen approaching. Off the delinquents scampered, leaving their deliverance from captivity to be achieved by the domestics of the *détenu*, who fortunately were at hand.

If Miss Sally Macnamara was mortally offended at this daring attempt upon the lives and liberties of her loo party, Colonel Macleod was not less incensed at having been confined by his own corps, and smoked by them with as scanty ceremony as they would have extended to a badger. The delinquents were threatened with courts-martial by the commander, and ap-

prized that law proceedings were instituted for false imprisonment by Billy Davock, who, unfortunately for them, had been among the number of the sufferers.

The parting admonition of the old Colonel was now painfully recollected ; and, too late, the wild youths discovered that his successor was one of different mould. To some, the consequences of their mad exploit would have been ruinous ; and, undervaluing the result, or calculating with false security on superior rank to shield him, my father generously took the blame upon himself, and became responsible alone for the late foray against the spinster. True, that by this course he exposed himself to the wrath of Antony O'Dogherty, with every asthmatic loo-player in the town ; but this was of minor import to one who more than once had "burned powder." After much diplomacy and letter-writing, it was intimated as a *sine qua non*, that a public apology was required, and this my father peremptorily refused. A formal complaint was in consequence transmitted to the general of the district ; and the result was, that to Major Cæsar Blake it

was officially notified that he had the option to retire from the regiment, or stand a court-martial. Irritated at his colonel's conduct in the transaction, my father chose the former alternative, and at the early age of twenty-four he left the service in disgust—a major upon half-pay.

Turned adrift upon the world, the major's first impulse would have determined him to join his second brother, who held a military command in Germany, but an incident had already decided the future career of my unlucky and light-hearted parent.

It happened that, during the preceding spring, when the 18th were quartered in Manchester, my father had obtained a short leave of absence to run up to London, and in the stage-coach accidentally encountered a gentleman and his daughter, to whom during the journey he contrived in some way to be serviceable. The lady was returning from a watering-place, whither she had accompanied her father. She was very young, very pretty, and very romantic; and it would have been extraordinary indeed, if the marked attentions of the handsome traveller should have escaped her observation. The

major at first sight was exceedingly enamoured. He was, however, no Romeo, but a firm believer in that leading axiom of a soldier's creed, that he is bound, as a point of duty, "to love all that is lovely, and all that he can"—and at that time he was unfortunately a pluralist in flirtations, having three affairs to occupy his leisure, and each of them important ones too. The old gentleman was shy and repulsive, as his daughter was winning and unsuspecting; and for the greater portion of the journey, the former eschewed all approximation towards companionship. Still the constant and gentlemanly attention of his fellow-traveller could not be entirely disregarded; and when his carriage met the stage, he interchanged cards with the polite passenger, and gave him an invitation to visit him when returning from the metropolis. While with jealous care the old traveller watched the transfer of his luggage, the young ones were taking a hasty farewell, and, I suspect, a tender one. Ellen Harrison departed deep in love, and for the two next stages, my father was silent and melancholy as a Trappist.

How long the fit would have continued is un-

certain ; but, fortunately for his peace of mind, a young dress-maker joined the coach in Coventry. He was thinking on his absent love—the soft seductive eye—the glance, downcast and furtive—the rosy lip—the flushing cheek, were all affectionately recalled ; and that artless look at parting, so silent and so eloquent—lingering and loving, as it stole from beneath her silken lashes, while the carriages were being separated. He sighed heavily ; and how could he help it ? The sigh was responded by a gentle suspiration. He glanced hastily at his solitary companion, and a lightning look from the blackest eyes in Coventry met his ! She too, poor soul, was a sentimentalist. She had parted from her lover in a pet ; and, God knows, that was enough to make any tender-hearted gentlewoman unhappy. Was it wonderful then, that two afflicted beings, *tête-à-tête* in a stage-coach, should approximate in their distresses ? Would it be pardonable in an Irish major of foot to encourage solitary melancholy, with the prettiest corset-maker in Coventry to console and be consoled ? Could my father emulate Saint Senanus of frigid memory, and he enflamed by the fire of an eye,

“soft, floating, dark,” which would have puzzled that holy man to have resisted? No—he did endeavour to solace his suffering companion—gradually Miss Minchin recovered her serenity; and when the Manchester Rocket stopped at the White Horse Cellar in Piccadilly, and the travellers departed in a hackney-coach, so tenderly did the gallant major enfold his fair friend in his military roquelaure, that *the cad* declared they were indubitably a newly-married couple, while the coachman averred upon his conscience, that the lady must be a runaway wife, “because the Irish gentleman was so very attentive; and every one knew that they preferred anybody’s to their own.”

Whether it was that Miss Minchin’s black eye operated as a counter-charm to Miss Harrison’s blue one, I cannot say, but my father nearly managed to forget her; and yet circumstances did occasionally recall her to his memory. One morning, a nameless billet brought him a beautiful ringlet of light brown hair. Whose was it? It was puzzling, but he did not think the event worth the trouble of investi-

gation. The truth was, the major was a lady-killer, *billets doux* were no novelties to him, and ringlets reached him by every post, as various in their colours as the tints of the rainbow.

His removal from his regiment also created a general sensation. He had an extensive military connection, and had been a favourite in the different towns where he had been quartered with his corps. Wildness, if the offender be well-looking, is a venial crime in woman's eyes; therefore the dashing major was considered a proper subject for female sympathy. Colonel Macleod was universally disliked, consequently Cæsar Blake was declared by his male acquaintances an injured man—and they resolved unanimously that it was a hard case to lose one's commission for stuffing an old maid's chimney with a wet horse-cloth. No wonder, then, that my father, commiserated by both sexes, bore his misfortunes bravely; and when he returned to his brother's at Castle Blake, and Connaught cousins to the third and fourth generation rose *en masse* to welcome him in genuine obsolete Irish hospitality, every regret

was banished, and the ex-major was as happy as fox-hunting and cock-shooting, dancing and drinking, could make him.

Yet at times, and it was natural enough, old recollections would cause a sigh. At his brother's jovial board, the memory of the mess-table would obtrude itself; and even in the merriest dance, other balls and other beauties would pass in "shadowy review." Sometimes he contrasted the rival belles who now besieged him with his absent loves, and the result was not favourable. Harriette Kirwan, "the Cynthia of the minute," was a glorious, joyous, unsophisticated madcap. All with her was natural and unstudied, whether she sailed through the mazes of a country-dance, or rode with masculine intrepidity to the fastest fox-hounds in the county, her light green habit and veil, like a streamer behind, "floating loose as mountain breezes." But Harriette's spirits were at times too exuberant—and when once she flogged a shepherd for letting a field-gate close against the counter of her thorough-bred mare, my father shuddered at this amazonian feat, and felt afraid lest in the married estate this passion

for the horsewhip might continue, and in connubial discussion, if all other arguments failed, the devil might tempt her, as a last resource, to try what virtue lay in flagellation.

Such was Cæsar Blake's state of feeling, when a letter addressed to him, bearing an English post-mark, was left upon the breakfast-table. The hand-writing of the direction, and the motto and device upon the seal, told that his correspondent was a female. Harriette Kirwan's eyes flashed while she observed the colour rise upon my father's cheek, as he perused the fair one's billet ; and when he rose suddenly and left the room, and afterwards, under some light pretext, declined riding with her to make a morning call in the neighbourhood, her jealousy was confirmed ; for Harriette loved him.

The letter that interested the major so much, ran thus :—

“ I hardly know in what terms to address you. Still I feel the effort must be made, and that too without farther preface. During many, many months, I have indulged the cherished expectation of seeing you again. You promised

this at parting, and I have clung to the hope, until to hope longer would be foolish.

“ I address you with diffidence ; for, in doing so, perhaps I shall incur your contempt. But even that I must risk ; and more I can scarcely suffer than I have already done from concealed anguish and suspense.

“ If I overstep the barrier prescribed by custom to my sex, do not judge of me unfavourably. She who does so, has nothing but the purity of her motives to console her. If she errs, she errs from principle ; and while she knows the act may be indelicate, she proudly feels that her honour is stainless as your own.

“ When I met you, Blake, my heart had never felt any attachment, nor owned warmer impressions than those which natural affections produce. Since then, one object has haunted my imagination—I have thought of you, prayed for you, dreamed of you. If this open and undisguised expression of my feelings offend, I shall be sufficiently punished by your indifference. I have no other fear ; I confide my secret to a soldier—my confidence is not mis-

placed, and I implicitly rely on your silence with regard to this communication.

“ I may have done wrong in encouraging fancies, which in maturer age I should have known were improper. I may be deemed by you a silly and romantic girl ; but this confession would not have been made—this weakness exposed—had not circumstances rendered a disclosure, otherwise indelicate, now, on my part, an imperious duty.

“ Blake—Oh ! that I dare add the epithet my heart suggests—I am addressed by one in every respect my equal : and he is encouraged by my only parent. I cannot love him ; my hand he may obtain, but he will have no heart to accompany it. Would I not be wrong, would I not be criminal, did I plight my troth to him at the altar of my God, when my thoughts by day, my dreams by night, wander to another ?

“ With bitter anguish I observed that, for some trifling misunderstanding with your commanding officer, you had in pique retired from the regiment. I know nothing of the causes ;

it is enough for me that you retired with unblemished honour. How far your circumstances may be affected by this professional misfortune I cannot conjecture ; but—why does my cheek glow—why does my hand tremble—why blush at the avowal ?—if my small fortune could be an object, it is freely, entirely yours. Would that I could win your heart ; mine, alas ! is all your own.

“ Blake — dear, dear Blake — pardon this madness. Alas ! I know not what to do : I have no sister to console, no mother to direct me. My father loves me ; but he is stern and cold—I dare not confide in him—his very look would kill me. Will you come to me ? Ah ! no ; seas probably divide us : but write to me, dear Blake. If your heart is another’s, in mercy tell me so : that cruelty will be kindness ; then must I tear your image from my heart, though the effort break it.

“ Farewell, *dear, dear* Blake. I feel that I have taken a fearful step, and suspense will now be insupportable. If I knew that to love you would be hopeless, vain, criminal, I might forget you. Be candid with me, and if your

affections are not for me, still pity the weakness of a woman, and think favourably of one, who, were it permitted, would be thine, and thine for ever. *Dearest*, adieu !

“ E. H.”

“ Stainsbury Park.”

The effect of this letter upon my father was decisive. The young, and beautiful, and artless Ellen loved him ! This was not the passion that lives but in the sunshine, and, when the horizon is overcast, droops and dies. Ah, no : when gay, courted, and *distingué*, she loved him, but she loved in secret ; but when fortune frowned—when youthful indiscretion exposed him to consequences that might have been fatal to his future prospects—“ when every tongue his follies named,” then, with a devotion that seemed romantic—the timid girl disclosed her latent passion, and took the out-cast to her heart. Was not this love—deep, enduring, ingenuous love ?—and Cæsar Blake’s determination was instantly formed to start without delay for Stainsbury.

Thus resolving, he had insensibly wandered through the shrubbery, and, following a by-

path, found himself in a coppice which overhung a small lake, some distance from the hall. Flinging himself upon a fallen tree, he perused again the letter of his artless and devoted mistress. "I shall not waste an hour," he said aloud, conscious that in this remote place none could overhear his soliloquy. "Yes, Ellen, quick as winds and distance will admit, I will prove how securely you have placed your love, and how fond and ardent its return shall be." He pressed the letter to his lips—replaced it carefully in his bosom—rose to commence preparations for an immediate departure, when a deep sigh startled him. Hastily he looked round, and Harriette Kirwan stood beside him.

Wild, reckless, and impetuous, she watched from her window the direction he had taken when he left the house. Maddened by jealousy—agitated by the tempest of her passions, without any definite object to direct her, she determined to risk an interview. She quickly followed him, while, unconscious that he was observed, my father took the very path which, above all others, he should have shunned.

Her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes alarmed him ; her bonnet was carelessly thrown back, and her magnificent dark hair escaping overspread her neck and shoulders.

“ Gracious God !” exclaimed my father, “ has anything alarmed you, Harriette ?” She was silent for some time, till, bursting into a passionate flood of tears, she sobbed hysterically. Her astonished companion seated her on the fallen oak, and placed himself beside her. “ Harriette, for Heaven’s sake, compose yourself ; what has occurred ?” Still no reply. “ Dear Harriette, can I assist, can I relieve you ?” No answer yet. “ Speak to me—tell me what distresses you—you know, Harriette, I have no cousin I love so well as you.”

“ And do you love me ?” she exclaimed with animation, as she turned her wild and delighted eyes upon his. “ Oh, Cæsar, say so again !—say you *do* love me, and I shall be then too happy !”

“ Dear Harriette,”—and my father made an awkward and embarrassing pause—“ you know I ever loved you as a sister.”

“ As a sister !” and she pouted sullenly ; “ a

sister's is not the love I feel towards you : Cæsar, I cannot live. Unless you let me love you fondly, warmly, ardently, as a woman loves, I shall die !" and she flung her arms round him, and hid her burning face upon his breast.

My father was fearfully agitated. He young, impetuous, and unreflecting—the undisguised passion of one so dangerously beautiful as Harriette Kirwan, might have wrought their mutual ruin. She hung upon his bosom, her eyes swimming with tears ; and when he strove to calm her agitated spirits, and reason with her coolly, his lips unluckily met hers, and a fervid kiss of those impassioned lips interrupted, alas ! the philosophic homily he had prepared himself to deliver.

It was indeed for both a trying moment : beautiful arms were wound around him, and looks, dark and lustrous, turned passionately upon his ;—eyes that required the direct intervention of a patron saint to disarm—that none but an anchorite could resist—that an Irish gentleman should more especially avoid, as

“ He that knows

His heart is weak, to Heaven should pray
To guard him against looks like those.”

Just then a noise was heard—a red setter burst through the copse—a woodcock flushed—a gun exploded—and, breaking the hazle boughs above their heads, the dead bird fell at my father's foot. Instantly, hurrying his dangerous cousin along the path, before the sportsman could reload, the major and his companion were clear of the shrubbery, and directing their steps to the house by the open carriage drive.

It may be conjectured that the soldier carelessly avoided another *tête-à-tête*. Harriette, mistaking the cause of my father's agitation during their morning interview, ascribed it to very different feelings, and indulging in hopes groundless and delusory, prepared to follow up her success. But the major, like an able commander, would leave nothing to chance, and had determined on retreating without "beat of drum." Secretly, therefore, orders of readiness were issued to Denis O'Brien, whom he had "purchased out" when he left the 18th. The baggage was packed without parade; and before daylight next morning, while the blooming Harriette dreamed of her dashing kinsman, the false commander was levanting upon the coach-

box of the Galway mail, with Denis and a brown portmanteau on the roof, the valet lilting an Irish song, and the master blowing “a comfortable cloud,” with as much indifference as if they had bidden a ceremonious farewell to all in Castle Blake, “nor left a breaking heart behind.”

It would be irrelevant to notice the fair one's rage when the departure of Cæsar Blake was first announced. In her chamber, she gave vent to feelings that were wild and tempestuous enough. Meanwhile the beloved one was posting to her favoured rival. The winds blew favourably and distance lessened—until on the fifth evening, by the light of a splendid moon, the major drove into the remote village, adjacent to which the mansion and domain of Mr. Harrison lay.

CHAPTER III.

THE CROSS KEYS AND THE INTERVIEW.

It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard ;
It is the hour when lovers' vows
Seem sweet in every whisper'd word ;—
And gentle winds, and waters near,
Make music to the lonely ear.
Each flower the dews have lightly wet,
And in the sky the stars are met,
And on the wave is deeper blue,
And on the leaf a browner hue,
And in the heaven that clear obscure,
So softly dark, and darkly pure,
Which follows the decline of day,
As twilight melts beneath the moon away.

But it is not to list to the waterfall,
That Parasina leaves her hall ;
And it is not to gaze on the heavenly light,
That the lady walks in the shadow of night ;
And if she sits in Este's bower,
'Tis not for the sake of its full-blown flower ;
She listens, but not for the nightingale,
Though her ear expects as soft a tale.
There glides a step through the foliage thick,
And her cheek grows pale, and her heart beats quick ;
There whispers a voice through the rustling leaves,
And her blush returns, and her bosom heaves :
A moment more, and they shall meet—
'Tis past—her lover's at her feet !

PARASINA.

THE Cross Keys at Stainsbury was one of those comfortable country inns, which the ex-

perienced traveller prefers to the noisier houses of public accommodation that are to be found in larger places. It was “a low snug dwelling, and in good repair,” flanked on one side by an extensive row of stabling, and on the other by a crowded stackyard. In front appeared a well cropped garden, with its flower-knots, and apiary, and close-cut hedges. There was a general neatness out of doors which told “mine host” was no sloven: within, every thing was orderly and scrupulously clean; and when the traveller looked at the well-appointed parlour, he could not but contrast it with the dirty, dreary, rackety caravanseras, which even the best of the Hibernian hostels at that time were.

The arrival of the gallant major occasioned some bustle among the household of the Cross Keys. The soldier having now reached the scene of action, settled himself before the cheerful wood fire to arrange his plans for opening the campaign, by communicating his arrival to his “lady love.” This, as it was the first, would probably be the most difficult movement—a failure would be fatal, and, therefore, due

caution must be exercised. In Denis O'Brien he had an efficient and devoted ally, and, barring blunders, never did a more accomplished valet assist in the abstraction of an heiress. Denis had a bold heart, a stout arm, a ready wit, and brass enough to qualify for a London footman; but he had his failings, and these were an inveterate brogue, an unquenchable thirst, and an aversion to cool argument, which sometimes induced him to strike first, and reason afterwards.

While my father was ruminating upon his plans, the table had been covered with a snowy cloth, and other necessary appendages for his immediate refreshment. Whether hunger or love had rendered his perceptions less acute than ordinary, I cannot say, but as he sate in moody silence, beating the "devil's tattoo" upon his boot, and gazing on the fire, the landlord's handsome daughter had visited and left the apartment thrice, without being noticed by the guest. This insensibility of the stranger piqued the *demoiselle*, who determined to interrupt his meditations.—"Did you order wine, sir?" she said, poking her pretty face over my

father's shoulder. But the traveller continued tapping the metal stove with the point of his cane. "Sir—sir, are you asleep, or at your prayers?" and she lightly touched his arm. My father raised his eyes carelessly, and they encountered a pair of as brilliant hazle ones, as ever undid a devotee.

"Now, Heaven pardon you," said the traveller, "I had just made resolutions against temptation, and you come here to overset them."

"Sir—sir, for shame; how could you kiss one so, and the window open?"

"Well, child, and who's to blame for that? Draw the curtains, and we'll talk about the wine. I'm so modest! it's a failing, I know—but who is faultless?"

"Modest! are you an Irishman?"

"Yes, pretty one, sit down upon my knee, and I'll give you all the particulars of my birth, parentage, and education."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed the young attendant. "Gallant sir, have I ever seen that modest face before? Nay, I am not near-sighted, and am just as safe with the table between us. Have I had the honour of tra-

velling in company with a crusty old man, a beautiful girl, and a most impertinent major, who, while the honest gentleman was engaged in attending to his trunks, did not neglect that opportunity, to bestow his parting benediction on the lips of the blushing daughter ?”

“Now, who the deuce are you ?” cried the soldier. “Speak, or I’ll jump over the table and kiss you to death upon the spot !”

“What a desperado the man must be !” said the maid of the inn. “Shall I tell a tale that happened not a hundred years ago. Once upon a time, a young lady went to a watering-place with her papa, and a cross papa he was. The day before she left home, her maid took a fancy to get married, and what was to be done? She could not get a servant, and persuaded her nurse’s daughter to be her attendant for the time. On the return of the lady by the stage, (for papa would not travel as other people do, in their own carriages,) unfortunately a tall, impudent, well-looking Irish major was a fellow-passenger. Argus-eyed as the old man was, the soldier out-manœuvred him — persuaded the poor girl that she was in love, and in that belief she has

since continued. Now, the attendant was not blind ; she saw from behind the carriage that, while papa was rummaging the boot, the major was kissing his daughter, while he placed an emerald ring upon her finger, which ring the silly girl has worn next her heart since they parted."

"Stop ! you have my secret—Am I safe—may I place confidence in you, my pretty one ?"

"Listen," she replied, "and you will best judge. My father and mother were fellow-servants at the hall, which they left upon their marriage. This inn and farm belong to Mr. Harrison, and when they became vacant he placed my parents here. Soon afterwards, Miss Ellen's mother died in giving her birth, and the charge and nursing of the pretty orphan were entrusted to mine. Never did sister love another better than I do her. I know how her affections are disposed of. If she weds to please her father, her misery for life is certain. If she weds to please herself, she will be deserted and disinherited ; for there lives not a more unbending and unrelenting parent than hers. She has, it

is true, a fortune in her own right, which none can control ; but to all else (and her father's power over his estates is absolute) let her bid adieu. You, sir, have no trifling difficulties to surmount. You must be prompt, and at the same time, cautious. Beyond a day or two, here you cannot remain unknown and undiscovered. If a suspicion arises, you and Ellen are separated for ever. My father is devoted to his master. Take care of him. But what errand brought you here ? What reason can you assign for stopping at an obscure inn, and at a remote village ? You cannot pass for a farmer, or a bagman, or a horse-dealer, or any thing connected with an honest calling. That military swagger and impudent look, and the mad Irishman who accompanies you, would at once betray your cut-throat trade. The fellow was scarcely in the house before he squabbled with the exciseman, and tumbled the dairy-maid about as if he had known her for a twelve-month. Pray, what business brought you here ?”

“ Upon my conscience, my dear girl, that's a poser !” returned my father.

“ I have it—here—read this,” and Phœbe

handed the major a country paper, while a loud voice called to her from without, to say that dinner was ready ; and when she left the room, my father perused the advertisement.

It was a sale of horses, the property of a departed fox-hunter, who lived a few miles from Stainsbury ; and they were, as the newspaper announced, to come in a few days “ unreservedly to the hammer.” This was indeed a lucky event ; and the major decided, that to buy horses should be his errand, and that he would accommodate himself during his sojourn at the Cross Keys, with the name of an old friend in the Enniskillen dragoons, at present quartered at Ipswich. Mr. O’Brien was quickly summoned ; and before Phœbe re-entered with dinner, Denis was fully instructed in the object of their visit to the inn, and cautioned, moreover, to abstain from disorganizing dairy-maids and quarrelling with excisemen.

When dinner was removed, as Phœbe laid the wine upon the table, she addressed the major in an under voice,—

“ Fortune favours you to-night. A monthly club, of which my father is a member, meets at

the Red Lion, on the other side of the bridge. This will remove a very troublesome and inquisitive neighbour for the evening, and enable me to apprise Miss Ellen of your arrival, which, without rousing his suspicions, I could scarcely have ventured to have done at this late hour. But hark ! I hear the keeper's voice in the kitchen, and from him I may probably ascertain how the folks at the hall are occupied." So saying, she left the room.

Nor was she long absent ; and on her return there was an excitement in look and manner, that told her to be the bearer of important news.

" Every thing favours you, gallant sir. There is a party of gentlemen at the hall. Mr. Harrison will be of course engaged with his company, and Miss Ellen most probably in the drawing-room or her own chamber. If this be the case, you shall in person announce your arrival. Attend to me. The window is low ; open the lattice, step gently out, turn round the corner of the stables, and you will find yourself in a narrow lane ; it leads to a wicket in the park-wall, for which I have a key. Wait for

me there, and keep close under the hedge, lest your figure be discovered by the moonlight. I will join you speedily ; and I shall send your servant in to close the casement, after you have passed through it."

My father was a daring, devil-may-care fellow, and quickly as events hurried on, he was all ready for action. Denis was duly apprised of the intended expedition, admonished to be on the alert, and to be sure to keep his mouth close, and ears and eyes open. My father put on his hat, filled a bumper, and pointing to the decanter, intimated that Mr. O'Brien might follow the example. "Here's luck," said the master, as the wine disappeared ; "Amen," responded the attendant ; and next moment the major stepped gingerly out, and Denis closed the lattice.

Never was there a sweeter night to spirit a lady off, or achieve other feats, to which the garish light of day is supposed to be unfavourable. Following the directions of his pretty guide, the major easily found out the path and reached the wicket. Denis remained upon the *qui vive*, visited the parlour with fuel, and

appeared to be in close attendance on his master, while Phœbe departed for the hall with a parcel, which fortunately had arrived by the evening stage, and which she stoutly declared to be an article of paramount importance, requiring an immediate delivery. All was ably executed; and in a quarter of an hour Cæsar Blake found himself safe within the park-walls which enclosed his gentle mistress. Phœbe conducted him by a private walk to the rear of the mansion, and ensconced him in a clump of evergreens, while she proceeded to execute her embassy.

It was quite evident that the whole establishment of the hall had ample occupation. The noise of joyous revelry reached the major in his ambuscade. Lights flashed across the passages, and figures appeared and vanished. The opposite wing of the building was the scene of the evening festivity. Thence the noises came, and there the windows were illuminated; while those before which the concealed soldier was posted were lighted only by the moon, and unfrequented by any of the revellers.

While my father listened and looked from his

ambuscade, a solitary figure appeared at the window immediately before him, and by the stream of moonlight, it was evidently a female form. To judge from her attitude she was no sharer in the general festivity ; for she rested her head against the casement, and seemed absorbed in sombre meditations. Was it Ellen ? The figure was fuller and taller than his pretty mistress ; but this alteration a year might have effected. Should he venture to attract the attention of the solitary fair one ? It was hazardous ; it might be one of the domestics ; a discovery would undo him, and he determined to leave all to fate and Phœbe. Nor was he wrong : in a few minutes a second form was visible, and the dress and figure announced it to be his guide.

Brief as the dialogue was that ensued, the major watched for its termination with impatience. The action of the parties apprised him, that his proximity was being communicated by the maid of the inn. He observed the taller figure fling her arms round her companion's neck ; he saw the casement open ; he heard his own name softly whispered. Bounding from his conceal-

ment, he approached—passed through the window, and pressed to his bosom his beloved and beautiful mistress.

Joy and terror prevented Ellen Harrison from speaking ; and while my father supported her to a sofa, Phœbe, like a prudent sentinel, took care to secure the door, and bolt out all intruders. Poor Ellen was completely overpowered by conflicting passions, as the soldier covered her lips with kisses, and plighted his ardent love.—“Oh ! can you, will you pardon me, dear, dear Blake ! Was it not wrong in me to write so boldly ?”

The major pressed her still closer to his heart. —“Oh, no ; my best beloved ! that candour has bound me to you for ever ! But time flies, and every moment is precious ! Wilt thou fly with me, Ellen ?—*me !* a discarded soldier ? Wilt thou share my humble lot, while rank and wealth are at your refusal ?”

“Yes ; my own love ! all will I give up for thee—thou wouldst not deceive me ! I, who trust all—yours I am, and yours for ever !”

How long this lover-like rhapsodizing might have been continued, those who have experi-

enced the tender passion can best determine. To Phœbe it appeared necessary to interrupt it, and accordingly she approached the sofa—

“Come, gallant major—Is this a time for heroics? There is one not far distant who, did he but suspect the present *tête-à-tête*, I fear would be rude enough to make one of the party. Surely, between this and Gretna there is many a long mile, and you will have ample time to bill and coo upon the journey. Come, Miss Ellen, the major must march. Give her one parting kiss. Lord! did I tell you to give her twenty?”

The arguments of the *soubrette* were too just to admit of disputation. In a few minutes the necessary arrangements for an elopement on the next night were completed, and my mother agreed to leave her home for ever, and share the fortunes of one almost a stranger.

Favoured by the occupation of the household, the major and his handsome guide retreated from the enemy's cantonments without observation, and reached the Cross Keys safely. Phœbe stole in by the back-door unnoticed,

while her companion halted in front of the caravansera, to reconnoitre the premises, before he would attempt a re-entry by the casement.

There was no cause of suspicion, however, that either his absence, or that of "the maid of the inn," had been remarked. The major peeped through the lattice of the kitchen, and the appearance of the company was satisfactory. A glorious fire blazed within, where, on chairs and settles, divers guests were seen comfortably refreshing themselves. One, and the most prominent of the group, stood before the fire, and in him the major had no difficulty in recognizing his own worthy attendant, Mr. Denis O'Brien. He appeared to be at the moment undergoing a very searching examination, relative to his own and his master's motives for visiting the good town of Stainsbury; and to judge by that portion of the colloquy which the latter overheard, the interlocutor, as the Scotch call it, had small reason to plume himself upon the result of his inquisition.

"And it is to buy horses your master is come here?" said a short, red-nosed personage, directing a fiery grey eye upon the valet.

“It’s yourself may say that, with your own purty mouth,” replied Denis O’Brien.

“What does he want them for?” said the gentleman with the red nose.

“Just to keep his feet from the pavement,” returned Denis.

“Is he a dealer, or a coach-master?” asked ferret-eye.

Denis whistled a few bars of a song,—“He’s only a dragoon, jewel, and they take an oath at Highgate, niver to walk when they have a horse, and prefer riding into the bargain;” and he lilted up the butt-end of a ballad—

“Says the judge, you must bundle to Botany Bay;
My lord, then, says Bob, I won’t walk the whole way.
Singing, Dig e dum di, dum dee!”

“You are an Irishman,” continued the querist — “Pray what part of Ireland are you from?”

“’Pon my soul!” replied Mr. O’Brien, “you will oblige me particularly by telling me what part of it I’m not from?” and he sung—

“I courted in Cavan, play’d cards in Ardee,
Kiss’d the maid in Dromore, and broke glass in Tralee;
I married in Sligo, got drunk at Arboe,
And what’s that to any one, whether or no?”

“Is your master married?” said the stout stranger.

“If he ’s not, he ’s fairly promised;” was the reply.

“Pray, what family does he belong to? for I was some time in Ireland;” rejoined he with the red nose.

“What family?” replied Denis O’Brien, “Arrah, is it joking ye are? He ’s a true discindint of the kings of Connaught, and blood-relation to every Burke, Blake, and Bodkin, from Loughrea to Limerick.

“I lave my pate to Darby Tate,
My face to the O’Gradys:
And I lave my legs to Daniel Begg,
To shake among the ladies.
Sing modereen roo, a roo, a roo.”

And now, that I think of it, I’ll go and see whether he wants more fire;” and Mr. O’Brien swaggered out, leaving the stout gentleman rather dissatisfied with his information, much of which, by the by, he suspected to be apocryphal.

Nothing could have been more successful than the opening of the campaign. Luck was certainly on my father’s side; and “luck,” Mr. O’Brien averred, “was every thing.” Before he

retired for the night, the major held a cabinet council with his friend Phoebe, and it was then and there determined that, to elude suspicion, he should leave the Cross Keys next day, proceed to the next town, there remain *perdu* till evening, provide a carriage, return at midnight, and, with the assistance of his fair ally, enter the park and bear away his mistress.

All this was accordingly put in train. Denis received orders of readiness; and, by eleven o'clock next morning, the major and his man were on the road, after taking an affectionate farewell of the landlord and the curious gentleman with the red nose.

Allerton was but eight miles distant, and there my father established his head-quarters. The day, "big with the fate" of my parents, wore heavily through. The major was uncomfortable, and so was the major's man—for Denis was on duty; and when on duty, Denis, from military habitude, dispensed with the comforts of the bottle, to which on other occasions it was his fancy to apply.

Time kept moving, evening came on apace, and the weather, threatening since morning,

hourly grew worse. The wind rose, the rain fell sharply against the casement, as the cold shower was driven on by frequent gusts. The moon was hidden behind an impenetrable mass of clouds, and night fell with all that could render it dreary and unpropitious.

My father and his man Denis were not free from those superstitious fancies to which the natives of the "land of saints" are generally prone; and both, in private, drew from this elemental change, sinister auguries touching the success of their nocturnal expedition.

Eight, nine, ten, pealed from the town-clock. My father roused himself for action, and Denis fortified his person "again harm" by turning down a full bumper of cogniac. A bill was called, a post-chaise ordered round instant; and while Mr. O'Brien saw his effects duly deposited in the carriage, the major carefully examined the loading of his pistols. At half-past ten the master and man ascended the vehicle, and, to the astonishment of the household of the Black Bull, drove from that comfortable house of accommodation, upon a night when a Christian would not reject the dog of his enemy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ELOPEMENT.

Oh, lady, at thy window be,
It is the wished, the trysted hour.

Scotch Song.

Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower :
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
By all the operations of the orbs,
From whom we do exist, and cease to be ;
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was not until the travellers had cleared the streets of Allerton that they were fully aware of the dreary drive before them. The night was pitch-dark ; the carriage unprovided with lamps ; while through the leafless hedgerows the wind howled mournfully. How different

was this from the preceding evening—all then so calm and bright and exhilarating. It was

“ But the daylight sick,
Looking a little paler.”

Notwithstanding the difficulty attendant upon driving over intricate cross-roads, they reached their destination in safety, and while the carriage was placed at a convenient distance from the park-gate, the steeple-clock of Stainsbury struck twelve.

At the Cross Keys the inmates had retired to rest. The sign-board creaked in the breeze ; the mastiff was sleeping before the kitchen-fire ; the hostler was snoring in his crib ; and the dairy-maid dreaming of new ribbons, and the next fair. There was but one waking, and that one was the pretty Phœbe. My father approached the casement silently, where, to direct him, a flickering light was visible. His tap was answered promptly ;—the maid of the inn appeared, dressed and ready to accompany him ; and, as the window was low, the gallant major received her in his arms, and deposited her safely on the ground.

“Laws, how you do stop one’s breath!” said the *soubrette* archly. “I should suppose on this occasion you had no kisses to dispose of. How I pity Miss Ellen — she will be suffocated before you reach Gretna. But hush! — we must be silent. I am half afraid to venture, for I am certain Mr. Harrison’s keepers are afoot. There has been sad havoc lately among the pheasants, and the squire is outrageous, and determined to detect the poachers. Little does he imagine, while he is intent only on preserving game, that it would be far more necessary for him to protect his daughter. His keepers were drinking at the tap this evening, with three or four discharged soldiers whom he has hired as assistants. Are we not a daring party to venture to the house at midnight? But, major, I was so frightened after you left us this morning. You were scarcely clear of the village, before down came that nasty fellow with the red nose, whom you saw at the bar when you were bidding me good-bye. And Lord! he did so question me about you. Well, when he was gone some time, the squire himself rode up to

the door, and called out father. What passed I cannot guess, but the conversation was very earnest, and I half-imagined that I overheard your name. Yet, if Miss Ellen has been prudent, and made preparations for her journey without creating suspicion, we can have little to fear. God grant we may not be interrupted ! a failure now would ruin your hopes and her happiness."

While Phœbe was speaking, the party notwithstanding the extreme darkness, reached the wicket and unlocked the door, and advancing cautiously through the shrubbery, halted at the clump of evergreens which had sheltered the gallant major on the preceding evening.

Their vigil was a short one. In a few minutes the drawing-room window opened, and a figure was indistinctly seen. My father stepped silently from his ambuscade. "Ellen, my own loved Ellen !" he murmured.

"I am ready, dear Blake," replied a sweet voice, whose smothered sobs told how fearfully she was agitated.

"Haste, gentle love !" said the enamoured

soldier, as he received the trembling girl in his arms, and pressed her to his bosom tenderly.

“ Arrah ! *bedershin*.^{*} No love-making, major dear, if you plase at present,” said Mr. O’Brien as he shouldered a trunk.

“ On, gallant sir,” whispered Phœbe, who took possession of a dressing-case, while the lover passed his arm for support around the beautiful refugee, and endeavoured to assure her that all danger was at an end. And so thought Denis O’Brien.

“ Come along, Phaybe, my jewel !” he exclaimed to his fair companion, “ Would ye turn the light of yeer eye, if ye plase, upon the path, for a darker night a man nevir marched on. Holy Patrick !” he continued, “ it’s yourself that stood our friend. They may talk of St. George and Saint Denis—and he’s my own blessed namesake ; but Patrick *awourneein*, give me yourself at a pinch against the calendar. By all that’s beautiful, you’r the dacentist saint that ever a sinner crooked a leg to !”

“ Silence !” said my father, interrupting this ebullition of pious gratitude. “ In a few

* Anglice. Be quiet !

minutes, my Ellen, we will be secure from all pursuit. Forward !”

“ Stop !” thundered a loud voice, as five or six men sprang from the evergreens where they had been concealed, and threw themselves upon the refugees. An instant scuffle succeeded. The women shrieked ; Denis asked no questions, but pitched away the trunk, and hit down two of the assailants, while his master prostrated the man who seized him, and shook himself by a powerful exertion clear of a second opponent. Ellen clung to her lover’s arm ; and though she impeded his efforts at defence, her presence protected him from the violence of the attacking party, who appeared to turn their chief vengeance against the unlucky attendant. But Denis, to use the parlance of “ the fancy,” was a “ troublesome customer.” He was not a person to be easily overpowered. Many a hard knock he received, and to all he made a conscientious return. His earlier accomplishments in hurling and foot-ball were not in this extremity forgotten. He was reputed in Connaught to be “ mighty handy with the foot”—the darkness was favourable to the exercise of

this talent ; and it was rather difficult to decide whether the feet or fists of Mr. O'Brien were most efficient.

While the man was offering a desperate resistance, the master's hot temper fired at this attempt to arrest him. To rob him of his mistress, was to rend the deer from the tiger.

"Stand off!" he cried with a deep imprecation, "or I'll make ghosts of some of you!"

"Lay hold of him!" responded the voice of one, who seemed the leader of the rest.

Ellen clung wildly to her lover's arm, for one of them had grasped her cloak, and he drew a pistol from his bosom.

"Now, by my soul's hope," he exclaimed, "the first man that lays a finger on the lady is a corpse!" Daunted by the determination with which it was apparent the lover would protect his mistress, the men fell back save one, and he grappled at the major. "Ha, fellow! wilt thou cross me? Lift but a finger, and I drive a bullet through your heart!" and he pressed the muzzle of the weapon against the stranger's breast. But Ellen shrieked—

“ Oh ! stop—hold your hand—it is—*it is* my father !”

“ Nay, fear not, my love. Stand back, sir ! Unhand my servant, fellows—What would you with us ?”

“ Give up your arms,” said the leader.

“ When I give up life, and not till then,” was the reply.

“ Surrender !” exclaimed the father of Ellen.

“ Oh do, dear, dear Blake—’tis madness to resist,” cried the fainting girl.

“ What, and lose thee ? Never !”

“ You will not lose me,” she said in a low firm tone ; “ none shall separate us now.”

“ We will accompany you, sir,” said my father, addressing Mr. Harrison : “ walk on, we follow ;” and the major uncocked and returned the pistol to his breast, and supporting Ellen, he entered the mansion of her father ; Mr. O’Brien following in durance vile, while Phœbe brought up the rear, in the close custody of one of the keepers.

Mr. Harrison, when they entered the hall, called loudly for lights, which he ordered to be

placed in the dining-room. Danger, imminent, inevitable danger, has, it is asserted, sometimes changed the coward to a hero, and the extraordinary events of this night, had a singular effect upon the youthful and timid maiden. Aware that there was no alternative left her but a decided assertion of free will, she determined to brave the worst consequences of parental anger, and dare the denunciation of her father's eternal displeasure. Her lover felt the gentle pressure of her arm against his ; he turned his eyes, still flashing with excitement, upon those of his gentle companion, and he read there a look of confiding love and meek determination.

“ You will not leave me, Blake ?—Will anything induce you to give me up ?” she said in a soft and entreating tone.

Her lover pressed her hand.

“ Sooner, Ellen, shall my heart's blood colour the floor I stand on !” and, regardless of the presence of an angry father, he bent his lips to hers. Mr. Harrison noticed it ; he turned pale as death, but controlled his feelings. The servant returning, announced that the dining-room was lighted.

“Have the kindness, sir and madam, to follow me,” he said coldly, “and let the other prisoners stop here.”

“Prisoners!—we’re no prisoners,” exclaimed Mr. Denis O’Brien. “Phaybe, darlin, don’t mind him; we’re only what they call upon parole, and that manes that we’ll nather smash heads nor brake windows, but just go quiet and asy. Arrah! honour bright, ould gentleman; or say the word, and by Jasus, we’ll fight it over again.” But his master gave a signal which the valet appeared to comprehend. “Oh, I see—it’s to settle terms of surrender, as we used to say in Holland. Some of ye, and the divil speed yeer manners! might have handed one a drop of drink, after the tossing and tumbling we had without. *Mona mondiaoul!* if iver I was so flustered with an insignified skrimage; I’m as hot as if I had been at the clearing of a pattern.”

“Bring the fellow some ale,” said the master of the house; and while Denis was left to discuss a tankard, his master with the “old man’s daughter” on his arm, were ushered into the lighted chamber.

The scene was an uncommon one. Mr. Harrison settled himself coolly in his accustomed arm-chair; the soldier firmly confronted him, while Ellen, half sinking with terror and dismay, clung to him heavily for support. There was on her father's countenance a cold, and withering, and passionless resolution, which augured badly for his offending child, if any hope had remained of pardon. He scanned the major over from head to foot, and read in the bold and reckless bearing of his daughter's lover that before him was an unbending spirit that neither present threats nor future consequences could waver for a moment. He glanced at his only child, and, momentary as the look was, upon both the effect was powerful. A paleness covered his face, which had before been flushed with subdued passion, while Ellen quivered like an aspen in the breeze. The lover noticed her distress. There was wine upon the table, and filling a glass, he carried it to her lips—an effort of which agitation rendered herself incapable. Several minutes passed in silence: at last the old gentleman spoke.

“ Your name, sir ?” he said, addressing my father, whom he continued to question.

“ Cæsar Blake.”

“ Your country ?”

“ An Irishman.”

“ Your calling ?”

“ A soldier.”

“ Your rank ?”

“ A major upon half-pay.”

“ I seldom notice military matters, but I believe you were lately removed from your regiment : may I ask for what crime ?”

“ For none : I took upon myself the consequences of a youthful folly which others were engaged in, and to whom the results might have been ruinous.”

“ What was the offence, then ?”

“ Covering a chimney with a horse-cloth.”

“ Humph !—a sensible exploit. Have you any means ?”

“ But small ones.”

“ Name them.”

“ Regimental half-pay, and one hundred a year from my brother.”

“ What brought you here to-night ?”

“ To carry off your daughter.”

“ You are lovers, it would appear, and she was cognizant of the design. How was your intrigue carried on ?”

“ You must use a more correct term if you expect a reply from me.”

“ Humph !—well, courtship be it.”

“ I met her in the stage-coach by accident—loved her, wooed her, won her.”

“ You have achieved a wondrous conquest, as you imagine ?”

“ I think so ; I have won one that will make me happy.”

“ Will you wed her against my wish ?”

“ Most assuredly, if Ellen will consent.”

“ Did you point a pistol at my breast to-night ?”

“ I did.”

“ Was it loaded ?”

“ Yes, with a brace of bullets.”

“ Would you have shot me ?”

“ Certainly, had you persevered in detaining me, and I been unapprised by Ellen who you were.”

“ Who is the cut-throat who accompanies you ? ”

“ I presume you mean my servant.”

“ Who is the quean who roams through private parks at midnight with idle renegades ? ”

“ She is no quean, nor I a renegade.”

“ Oh, your pardon ! ” was replied sarcastically.
“ Well, who is that modest gentlewoman whom we found among the bushes ? ”

“ Daughter to the landlord of the Cross Keys.”

“ Ho-ho ! am I then betrayed by my own servants and dependants ? ”

“ Certainly not : he of the Keys knew nothing of the attempt.”

“ And you will marry my daughter, although I peremptorily forbid it ? ”

“ I have already answered you.”

“ Enough, Sir.”

He rose from his chair, filled a glass of wine, drank it, took two or three turns across the chamber, then seating himself, fixed a searching and unmoved look upon his trembling daughter.

“ Ellen,” he said in a low and tremulous tone,

that might either be occasioned by anger or affection—"Ellen, attend to me, for it is probable that this is the last time I may address you. How is it that I find you regardless of the duty you owe to me as your natural protector—regardless of brilliant prospects of rank and opulence, which, in your own country, and among your own connexions, you may realize when you please? How comes it that duty and interest are alike abandoned, and that you sacrifice all to share the shattered fortunes of a disbanded soldier, and, for aught you or I can tell, a profligate and a beggar?"

My father's cheek reddened, his eye blazed, his blood boiled, and it was easy to observe that there was a volcano labouring in his breast that required but small additional insult to explode.

"You cling to him," continued Mr. Harrison—"him, the acquaintance of some hours, and you leave *me*. Well, be it so. I shall ask you but a few questions: take heed, weak girl, for on your answers it depends, whether I shall pardon your disobedience, receive you as my child, proclaim you as my heiress, or cast you from me a

worthless and repudiated daughter. Hear me ! —You have five thousand pounds when at age, to which none can gainsay your right ; I, if you are deserving, will leave you twelve thousand pounds a-year. If you have been hitherto too much in confinement, you may with my full concurrence mix in the world, and wed a man your equal.”

Ellen shook her head, and Mr. Harrison continued.

“ Well, I shall not press that union if you dislike it ; in this, or any other matter, I will assert no parental authority : if you are not obedient from a sense of duty, I will not seek it by compulsion. Reply to me with candour, and then determine by whom you will abide—your father or yonder gentleman.”

He paused, and seemed to hesitate ; but promptly he thus continued :

“ You love him ?”

“ Dearer than life !” returned a feeble voice, so inarticulate as to be almost inaudible.

“ And will you for him give up home and father, fortune, kindred, country ?”

“ All will I give up if required. But,

O my father, pardon me, pardon him ! and make us for life your slaves."

Mr. Harrison coldly waved his hand.

" Pause," he said, " before you repeat this resolution, for, let it be repeated, and the same roof shall never cover us again."

There was a momentary, a dreadful silence. Ellen raised her eyes; she looked upon the cold marble countenance of her father, she met the fond and anxious glances of the handsome stranger, and love prevailed.

" Wilt thou abide by him ?"

" Till death !" she murmured, and fainted in her lover's arms.

" It is settled," replied Mr. Harrison, as he rang the bell and ordered his own carriage to the door immediately; while the major placed Ellen in a chair, and bathed her lips and temples with water. Kneeling beside her, he called her by every term of endearment, and in two or three minutes he saw her sufficiently recovered.

While this scene was passing, Mr. Harrison stood a looker on, with his back against the mantel-piece, until the carriage wheels were

heard. In a cool and collected voice he ordered Miss Ellen's trunks to be put in.

"You are bound," he said, turning to my father, "I presume, to Scotland, for I trust you mean my daughter honourably;" and a bitter smile crossed over his pale and sarcastic countenance. Again my father's cheek blazed. "Nay, gallant sir, do not be irate; I know little of the world, but I have heard that sometimes these midnight meetings end with scanty ceremony. Might I request you to favour me with a certificate of marriage, so soon as this prudent and dutiful young lady becomes an honoured wife?—Give me my writing-desk." It was brought, and he unlocked it; then, turning to his daughter, he continued—"You must not leave this house a beggar," and, averting his head, he held a note-case towards her. She, poor soul, made a last desperate effort—she flung herself at his feet, and clasped his knees in speechless agony. But Mr. Harrison had an iron heart and iron nerves, and he coldly disengaged himself. "The carriage waits, sir," he said, addressing the major: "it will convey you to the

next stage. You had better secure that pocket-book ; it contains all you will ever get from me—one thousand pounds. I once invited you here, but now you are an intruder ;” and retiring from the room, his steps were heard deliberately pacing the corridor, as if nothing unusual had occurred.

My father raised his lifeless bride and bore her through the hall ; none resisted him ; Denis jumped up behind the carriage—Phœbe had disappeared in the general confusion—and, on a wild and fearful night, my mother deserted her home. The park-gates closed after her for ever—she flung herself distractedly into her lover’s arms, “and now the world was all before her.”

CHAPTER V.

NEWSPAPERS AND A DRAGGING HOME.

And such paragraphs in the newspapers."

The Rivals.

O'Roarke's noble feast will ne'er be forgot,
By those that were there, and by those that were not.

Old Ballad.

AFTER my mother's marriage she accompanied my father to Ireland. They delayed a few weeks in Edinburgh, under the plea of seeing that ancient and interesting city, but in reality, from a hope that some channel for a reconciliation might open between Ellen and her irritated parent.

Probably the wish expressed by the latter, that a certificate of his daughter's marriage should be transmitted, encouraged this expectation. The major accordingly obeyed his wishes ;

and in forwarding a document from the celebrated artist of Gretna, enclosed it in a manly and respectful letter from himself, in which he requested to be forgiven for the step he had taken. Poor Ellen also accompanied her husband's epistle with a strong appeal to the feelings of her father. In due course of post the receipt of the certificate was formally acknowledged by Mr. Harrison, the soldier's letter totally unnoticed, and his lady's returned with an unbroken seal. This latter circumstance the major concealed from his gentle bride, who was already suffering under the effects of parental displeasure.

In all besides, Ellen was truly happy. Her's was a heart formed for a tender and undying attachment. Before she wedded, she loved her husband with girlish romance, but now she idolized him as woman will, when she turns the undivided affections of a warm heart upon one sole and cherished object. Without a murmur she prepared to leave her native land; and strong in all-confiding love, consigned every hope of happiness to one comparatively a stranger. While on the evening preceding their embark-

ation, he pictured the lonely spot on which the house of his fathers stood ; while he described rude hills and savage scenery, and a wild population professing another faith, and speaking a different tongue — “ And wilt thou venture thither, Ellen ? ”

Clasping him in her arms, she turned her soft expressive eyes on his, as she repeated the beautiful passage from Scripture :

“ Whither thou goest I will go. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God ! ”

The reception my mother met from my father’s family was as enthusiastic as she could have anticipated. Before the gallant Cæsar had even intimated to his brother, as “ head of the house,” any intention upon his part of committing matrimony, the English newspapers teemed with an account of his elopement with “ the beautiful heiress of the wealthy Mr. Harrison.” The singular cause that induced him to retire from his regiment was still fresh in public recollection, and the absurd manner in which these two exploits were ridiculously coupled in the same paragraphs was indeed provoking enough. The

Morning Post thus announced my father's marriage :

“ Major C—s—r B——ke, who it will be remembered, abruptly retired from the 18th some months since, for stopping up a chimney-flue, by which two persons were unfortunately suffocated, passed through Carlisle on Sunday last, in a carriage-and-four, accompanied by the beautiful heiress of Stainsbury Hall. No pursuit after the fugitives was attempted, as Mr. H—rr—n lies without the least hope of recovery, from a wound of a pistol-ball received in the unfortunate *mêlée* that occurred on the recent occasion. The report that two keepers and the major's servant are dead, is at least premature. Of the recovery of one of the former we know that sanguine hopes are entertained.”

The *Morning Chronicle* thus delivered itself:—

“ We have often to lament the culpable inaccuracy of some of our contemporaries. In a morning journal of yesterday, a very imperfect statement is given of a recent occurrence in high life, of which we have been in full possession,

but which, through delicacy to the feelings of the parties concerned, we have abstained from noticing. It will be a subject of gratification to the numerous and distinguished connexions of ‘both the houses,’ to learn that Mr. H——n, whose leg it was found necessary to amputate above the knee, bore the operation well; and that the gallant ex-major, after having the ball very skilfully extracted by Doctor Drench of Newark, was able to proceed to Gretna with the agitated but beautiful bride. The domestic who unhappily lost his life on this lamentable occasion, was under-butler at Stainsbury Park, where he had lived for fifteen years and a half, greatly respected. He leaves a widow and seven young children to lament his premature death.”

“*The Globe*” had another version of “the affair,” from which, however, “*the Sun*” took care to differ. “*The Evening Mail*” denied the suffocation point-blank; and “*the Courier*” assured the world, that neither man, woman, nor child were killed, wounded, or missing, save and except the young lady and a poodle-dog, which latter, by the accidental falling of an imperial,

had been mained for life. Now, though all this was to the parties very provoking, and particularly annoying to Mr. Harrison, yet it *éclated* the business gloriously in Connaught. Nothing could have been more consonant to the general taste of the aristocracy of that favoured corner of the earth. First, there was an elopement. Second, it was with an heiress. Third, the successful swain was a member of “the tribes”^{*}—a genuine scion of the *ould stock*. Fourth, there were divers lives lost on the occasion. Fifth, judging from conflicting statements, there must have been a general *rookawn*,[†] without which a runaway match would not be worth a straw. In short, it was unanimously resolved, that Cæsar Blake was “a broth of a boy;” that his lady, in person and purse, would be a useful addition to the neighbourhood; and that if elderly gentlemen, under-butlers, and poodle-dogs interrupt half-pay majors, they must abide the consequences. To this general commendation, even Miss Sally Macnamara, oblivious of

^{*} The most ancient families in Galway are known by this title.

[†] Rookawn, in English, means a general row.

stuffed flues and false imprisonment, magnanimously assented.

My mother's journey into Connaught was one of novelty and interest. She had been hitherto secluded, and almost caged from infancy within her father's mansion, and to her the world was new, strange, and imposing. Mr. Harrison from boyhood had indulged a general dislike towards female society. He married, rather as a matter of family necessity to perpetuate his name, and prevent his large estates from passing to a collateral branch. He had lost his wife soon after his union; and whether their tempers had been dissimilar, or that he had a fancy to remain unshackled, he ever afterwards eschewed "the holy estate." Had Ellen been a boy, he might have probably bestowed more attention in cultivating the temper, and gaining the affections of his only offspring. But in childhood Ellen was confided to a nurse and governess; and when she approached maturity, her father was more solicitous to estrange his daughter from the world, than, by a judicious introduction to society, correct the deficiencies inseparable from an imperfect education. It is true, that

from competent instructors she had acquired the usual routine of fashionable accomplishments. She learned languages, understood music, was conversant with books, but perfectly unacquainted with mankind. Hence her rapid and romantic attachment to my father might have possibly originated; and with an ardent imagination and feeling heart, no wonder that her fancy overcame her prudence. She had no countervailing passion to check the first out-breakings of youthful passion. To her father she looked with reverence; but she looked with fear. There were no sympathies between them. She lacked an object on whom to bestow her young affections; and one like Cæsar Blake, handsome, showy, imposing, and *distingué*, was the likeliest person in the world to obtain them.

As the major and his bride landed at a northern port, their route to Connaught lay through a desolate but romantic country. The language, the scenery, and the people, were new to the pretty *sasanach*.* The risk of traversing a kingdom on the eve of a convulsion,

* A term applied to the English.

and where a civil war had already broken out, was alarming to one who had scarcely passed the boundaries of her father's park. Every group of peasants alarmed the timid traveller, for every thing bespoke apprehension and insecurity. The preparations of her husband and his attendant against attack; the frequency of military posts; the marching of troops; the occasional interruptions from patrols; and even her husband's communications with the peasantry in a strange tongue,—all tended to divert my mother's attention, and prevent her from dwelling upon the home she had deserted, and the parent of whom her own act had bereaved her.

The bleak and uninteresting country between Enniskillen and Sligo had been safely passed; and after a necessary rest, the travellers proceeded to cross the wild but romantic baronies of Tireragh and Tyrawley. That mountain-road, destined to witness soon the movements of an invading army, was still quiet—and having reached the boundary of Galway, my father stopped at a solitary inn, where the carriage of his kinsman was in waiting.

The sun was setting gloriously on Lough Corrib, and that magnificent sheet of water was blazing in the red stream of departing day. Around, mountain was piled on mountain; their dark and rocky bases, finely contrasted with their pointed summits, now covered with a cap of snow. For miles the road was cut through the declivity of a hill, leading through defiles or overhung by precipices, which, to a timid traveller, were alarming enough. The last gleam of daylight disappeared as the carriage cleared a deep mountain gorge, and entered a flat and extensive valley, rendered additionally gloomy from the height of the hills which on either side shut it in.

At the extremity of this highland glen, the ancient mansion of the Blakes was erected. The major, in the feeble moonlight, endeavoured to point out the edifice to his bride, and directed her attention to the dusky outline which was indistinctly visible. While she looked in the direction, lights appeared and vanished, while on the right and left of the road, others danced along the hills, or flashed through the copse-wood; and at the extremity of the glen, a

ruddy flare from a stationary fire was discernible. The fair traveller was about to inquire what those meteors were, when the carriage turning an angle of the road, disclosed a dark mass of human beings moving rapidly towards them. Suddenly, a wild yell arose from an adjacent hillock, a horn was shrilly blown, a thousand torches were lighted up, and the road, the rocks, and every rising ground, appeared crowded with a countless multitude of fierce and savage-looking people. A number of them rushed forward—the carriage stopped—and a tremendous shout echoed through the valley. Ellen screamed and clung to her husband for protection. “Gracious God !” she exclaimed, as the horses were being taken off; “are they about to murder us?”

“Arrah ! no, my lady,” replied the well-known tones of Mr. Denis O’Brien; “they’re only going to *drag your honour home* !”*

“*Drag me home* ! what does this all mean, my love ?” she said, addressing my father.

“Nothing, dear Ellen, but that the tenants

* *A dragging home*—is the conveying the bride to her husband’s house with a full attendance of all the clan.

are come here to bid you welcome in their own wild fashion, and conduct you to my brother's house. You have nothing to apprehend from them; for there is not one of these men who would not die to protect you."

Even with this assurance, my mother's heart beat violently, as she looked on the formidable escort that on every side surrounded the carriage. The lurid glare of torch-light, the fierce and savage air of the men, their wild yells, and wilder gestures, the scene, the hour—all were calculated for effect, and made, accordingly, a lasting impression upon the timid stranger.

In half an hour, a huge ivy-covered archway admitted the vehicle, and an ancient castellated building was seen at the extremity of a long straight approach, having on each side a row of stately elms. A fire of immense size was blazing before the house, and a myriad of women and children flitted backward and forward, and returned yell for yell to the crowd, that encircled the carriage as it advanced slowly along the avenue. At the grand gate a group of young girls, bearing a garland formed of artificial flowers, interspersed with laurel branches

and gay-coloured ribbons, headed the procession. A shout that pealed over dell and mountain welcomed the bride on entering the domain, and a salvo from some small guns upon the battlements of the castle made a suitable response. A dozen pipers struck up "O'Roark's return to Connaught," while a thousand welcomes, in English and Irish, were repeated from as many mouths.

From the denseness of the crowd, the carriage was obliged to draw up at some distance from the hall; but a personage of uncommon height descended the steps promptly, and buf-feting the mob aside, unclosed the door. "Cæsar, my darlin boy!"—"Manus, my dear brother!" were mutually repeated, as my father and the stranger grasped each other's hand. The latter took the bride gently in his arms, and pronounced some Irish words in a voice of thunder: a lane through the multitude was instantly opened, and, lightly as if she had been an infant, he bore her up the steps, and into a huge hall crowded with persons of both sexes. Placing her on the floor, he looked at her for a moment; then, pressing her to his bosom, he

kissed her with a fervour that dyed her cheeks with blushes.

“ Cead mille fealtagh, my pretty sister,” exclaimed the herculean stranger ; “ Mona mondiaoul ! but I’m proud of you, Cæsar Blake !” Then presenting her to a crowd of cousins, he surrendered up his fair charge to be kissed and congratulated *ad libitum*.

When the first hurry of salutations was over, the timid bride looked round to see if her husband was near her ; but he was not in the hall. Through the open door, however, she recognized him, borne on the shoulders of the multitude without.

“ They will not harm him ?” she whispered to Denis O’Brien, who was bustling after his mistress with a cloak.

“ Harm him !” ejaculated the valet with a stare ; “ if there was a man yonder that would say black was the white of his eye, by the holy trout of Killgeever,* they would pitch him into

* No fish in ichthyology, cuts a more distinguished figure than this celebrated trout.

There is a ruined chapel and holy well about a mile from the village of Louisburgh, much frequented by all good Catholics, who consider that a little penance and purgation in

the fire, as a gassoon* would toss in the shin-bone of a horse !”—and Denis was right, for the namesake of the redoubted Roman, after making a circuit of the lawn, was safely deposited on the steps.

this life may clear off that large arrear which improvident sinners allow to accumulate with a kind of compound interest. This blessed well, in the year 98, was tenanted by a trout of great sanctity and immense size ; he was a holy and a happy fish, for the pilgrims fed him to his heart's content, and he had nothing to do but eat, drink, and amuse himself.

It happened that a party of Scotch fencibles had been detached from head-quarters to Louisburgh, and on their return, in passing the well, an ungodly Highlander, *sua-dente diabolo*, determined to abstract its blessed occupant. He did so, and on arriving at his barracks, proceeded to refresh himself. The fire was lighted, the trout duly prepared, and, amid the ribald jests of the profane soldiery, the devoted fish was tossed into the fryingpan ; when, lo ! with a clap of thunder, the trout flew up the chimney, and, without the loss of a scale, returned uninjured to Killgeever. There he lived for many a long year afterwards, gladdening the hearts of true believers, until from age and obesity he went the way of all fish.

We lament to think that, from the infidelity of the times, persons may be found sceptical enough to question the truth of this miracle. If such there be, should they find it advisable to operate at a holy well for their souls' weal, we recommend them not to select Killgeever.

* A boy.

The banquet was duly served—the pipes commenced lilting in the hall—the bottle circulated merrily—the mob outside danced, drank whiskey, shouted “Caesar for ivir!” and broke each other’s heads—and all was a glorious chaos of fighting, love-making, and intoxication.

Early in the night, the bride pleaded fatigue, and begged permission to retire, which was politely granted.

One circumstance struck my mother as being singularly characteristic of the chieftain of her husband’s clan. Before she retired, her new relative requested her to accompany him to the lawn, where the garland was erected on a pole, and the *elite* of the young peasants dancing beneath it. Ellen good-humouredly assented, and, leaning on his arm, passed through the crowd. The whiskey, which was distributed in awful quantities, had done its duty, if blows and kisses were a proof. A young fellow, who did not observe the chieftain’s approach, flourished a cudgel so near my mother as to startle her. Manus Blake made a long stride to bring the offender within reach of his arm, and with a blow felled him to the earth, from which he of

the cudgel appeared in no hurry to get up. This feat, however, did not even interrupt the sentence he was delivering, which, by the way, was a solemn assurance that a more peaceable and orderly set of subjects were not in possession of the king, God bless him ! than his own good tenants of Blake Hall.

Afterwards, when my mother expressed regret at the occurrence to Denis O'Brien, who attended her as closely as if he had been bred a page of honour—

“ Arrah, my lady,” said the lackey, “ don’t be after botherin yer head about spalpeens of that sort, at all at all : what the divil business had he to be handlin a *boltheine*,* good or bad, and it yer honor’s *draggin-home* ? He’s a bad member any how. I wonder if his jaw’s broke ? for a clout from the master—May the Lord strengthen his arm !—is liker a kick from a horse than a clip from a christian !”

With Denis’s remark my mother fully coincided—for, in good truth, Manus Blake was a hard hitter.

* *Boltheine*, means the lesser moiety of a flail.

CHAPTER VI.

AN IRISH LODGE.—HARRIETTE KIRWAN'S MARRIAGE.

Oh ! did you ne'er hear of Kate Kearney ?
She lives on the banks of Killarney.
From the glance of her eye, shun danger and fly,
For fatal's the glance of Kate Kearney.

Old Ballad.

THE first month of my mother's sojourn in Castle Blake was an endless round of rude and rackety dissipation. From the corners of the earth all the collateral branches of the ancient name, congregated to welcome their English relative. As each personage was attended by a suitable following, befitting the high occasion of the visit, and in nowise particular as to the period of departure, large as the mansion was, it was marvellous how it could contain the crowd, who occupied every

nook and cranny from the attic to the cellars. These multitudinous ramifications from the parent stem rivalled each other in their attentions to the bride. All seemed bent on offering and accepting hospitality; and so numerous were the invitations pressed upon my parents, that a whole year would not have enabled them to fulfil a moiety of the same.

Yet my mother was far from happy. Her gentle disposition was unsuited to the exuberant spirits with which all around were gifted. Her memory recurred to the unhappy circumstances attendant on her hurried marriage; and she remembered that it was unhallowed by a parent's blessing. True, when she looked upon her handsome husband, love found a powerful plea to atone for filial disobedience; but in her solitary hours the parting-scene with her angry and deserted father embittered her happiness, and saddened that halcyon season, which should, without any thing to alloy it, have succeeded her union with him whom she so devotedly loved.

Nor were other causes wanted to increase these regrets. One so secluded from the world

till now, found herself suddenly thrown among strangers, and the member of a society constituted very differently from any she had been previously acquainted with. The cold and formal order of English visiting, the quiet and regulated character of its social intercourse, and the systematic arrangements of that home she had abandoned, painfully contrasted with the wild scene and wilder people, with whom she must be naturalized in future. Those now around her appeared a separate race from any she had been accustomed to. Careless of the present, reckless of the future, they acted from momentary impulse, and seemed indifferent whether the result was right or wrong. The women rode, visited, dressed, flirted, danced, and married. The men hunted, shot, played, drank, quarrelled, fought, and made friends again. Out of doors, there was clamour and confusion ; within, a wasteful, irregular, comfortless course of dissipation, to which neither time nor tide appeared to place a limit. While my mother with gratitude acknowledged the kindness with which she was universally regarded, the very efforts to prove attachment were over-

powering to a timid stranger. To anticipate what she wished, to discover if possible aught that would give her pleasure, to mark her as the sole object of general attention and respect—all this was done; and yet the days when Cæsar hunted appeared interminable, and before the established order of Milesian banqueting would allow the unwilling reveller to steal from the late carouse, poor Ellen would count the weary hours as they sounded from the belfry, and pray for some peaceful home, where she might hold a more tranquil communion with him, for whom country and kindred had been left.

It was not long before an accidental disclosure of her feelings, apprized her liege lord that his wife would prefer a life of less excitement, to that which she led in Castle Blake. Whether from an anxiety to render her more happy than she appeared, or that his own wishes were favourably disposed to domestic quietude, my father expressed a ready assent; and a beautiful shooting-lodge at no great distance from his paternal mansion happening at the time to be unoccupied, he rented it immediately; and overruling all the objections of his hospitable

brother, preparations were made for a speedy departure.

On a sweet spring morning, Cæsar Blake and his small household left the hall of his fathers to occupy their new abode. Wild as the approach to Castle Blake had looked to the fair stranger, on the memorable evening of her "dragging home," the scenery that surprised her then, was tame and common-place to that which her present route presented. The point to which their course seemed to be directed, was buried in the very heart of mountains, which appeared to present insuperable obstacles to any human effort to fix a habitation within them. To approach these highlands, a rude path had been scarped through the rocky bases of the hills, or carried over ravines and along the ridge of precipices, which nature had vainly intended as a barrier against man. While passing these defiles, my mother was terror-stricken at the fearful consequences which a horse starting or a broken trace might occasion; but, these difficulties overcome, a scene of romantic grandeur was suddenly disclosed.

When the gorge of the mountain-pass was

cleared, a long heathy valley, intersprinkled with grassy hillocks, presented itself. A chain of Alpine heights enclosed it at either side, and one of superior altitude to all the others, seemed to block up the extremity of the glen. Throughout the whole extent of the valley, a beautiful stream flowed with the capricious irregularity that distinguishes a highland river ; at one time winding sluggishly through a morass, and at another bounding over some ledge of whinstone ; now creeping through a flat surface of verdant heath, and again brawling along a shrubby channel, half-choked with fallen rocks and masses of turf, which the violence of winter-floods detached from the sides of the mountain.

As the travellers neared the extremity of the glen, the source of the stream, along whose banks they journeyed, suddenly became visible. It was a long irregular sheet of dark-blue water, overhung by precipitous rocks, which sprang upwards from the margin of the tarn.* The black and beetling heights cast their shadows on the deep waters beneath them, which, unruffled by a breath of wind, exhibited a surface dimpled

* A highland lough.

into a thousand circles, by the rising of the trouts and gambols of the water-fowls. On the very apex of the mountain, to which a perpendicular wall of grey granite had forbidden human approach, two eagles had built an aerie. Sweeping in lazy circles round the nest, their wild and piercing screams disturbed the silence of the mountain-glens, while nothing beside was heard but the bleating of sheep and the rushing of the stream. Here the road appeared to terminate ; but no human dwelling was visible on the dreary expanse of this lone valley.

When, however, the travellers reached the very margin of the lake, a fissure in the hill-side, deep and narrow as if riven through the mountain by an earthquake, offered them a road. They passed the chasm safely, and in a spot, wild, lonely, and romantic beyond the power of imagining, the fairy edifice suddenly was seen.

It was a modern cottage, elegantly designed, and erected in a circular dell, formed by the bases of three precipitous hills. A small highland lake extended in front of the building, while about it pleasure-grounds were tastefully

disposed, with gardens and shrubberies, and every detached building which modern luxury requires. Early as it was, roses bloomed through the trellis of the verandas; berries of pensile plants festooned the casements richly, while the evergreens contrasted their gay foliage with the forest-trees, whose leafless branches were only breaking into bud. All around this secluded habitation bespoke the successful efforts of human cultivation, which, triumphing over natural obstacles, had formed a garden in a wilderness—an oasis among brown heaths and naked stones.

Nor did the interior of the villa disappoint the expectations its exterior elegance might occasion: all within was in excellent taste, and that best resource in solitude, the library, had been formed with considerable judgment. My mother was delighted with her new residence; her quiet but romantic fancy had here everything it panted for—here, with the man of her heart, and removed from the hurry of the world, the pretty visionary found in this highland glen “a paradise both pure and lonely.”

When Cæsar Blake readily gratified his lady's

longing for retirement, he was not uninfluenced by private considerations. Marriage had sobered the wild soldier, and he was wearied with the endless racketing which in Castle Blake was the order of the day. His brother was a curious relic of “auld lang syne”—the priest declared him “ultimus Romanorum;” and in sooth he was one of the last of those Milesian potentates, to whom ancestral virtues and vices had descended regularly with the family estates. Manus Blake was, after his own manner, as proud as he surnamed the “Morning Star:” with him the usages of his forefathers were sacred, and the roof-tree of his mansion was, in his estimation, hallowed as the sanctuary of the church. His ideas of hospitality made it the first duty of life; and he believed that he held his revenues in trust for the entertainment of all that pleased to claim it. To him noise and excitement were indispensable, and the clamour of the field without, must be succeeded by “tipsy mirth and jollity” within. Although a benedict for several years, he was childless, and therefore wanted those endearing ties which alone can render domestic

quietude endurable. In politics he took no interest : he was too independent to truckle to the government, and too honourable and open-hearted to plot with the wretched demagogues of the day.

But Cæsar Blake had more cogent reasons than he thought it necessary to explain, which caused him to abridge his visit to his kinsman—a fair and dangerous relative had intimated her intention of honouring Castle Blake with her presence ; and although she had bestowed her hand upon a lover, who had erst-while sighed in vain, the ex-major determined to avoid her.

During the period while my father had been absent, Harriette herself had not been unemployed. Deeply as she felt mortified at the unceremonious departure of him who proved insensible to her attractions, the full measure of her wrath was reserved for the morning, when the object of his secret expedition first transpired, and his elopement was officially gazetted with all its varied accompaniments. To conceal her feelings at this annoying disclosure was impossible, and a burst of wounded pride and hopeless passion ensued, that to the iron nerves of

Manus Blake himself, appeared alarming. For some days the deserted one secluded herself from all society ; but on the fourth morning she surprised the family at the breakfast-table, and then and there, announced her immediate departure for the capital on a visit to her aunt. This was natural enough ; none opposed her resolution, and she left accordingly for Dublin, greatly pitied by every female of the establishment, who declared her case a hopeless one—the disease was mortal, for the arrow was at her heart—and her next appearance would be, under a canopy of white plumes, on her route to Cahirmore, the last resting-place of the Kirwans. But they were wrong.

Harriette was “too fine an animal,” as a puppy in the — Light Dragoons termed her, not to be extensively addressed, and she might have entered into the holy estate more than once, had she pleased ; for, as the song goes—

“Of lovers she’d plenty.”

But her fancy, not to say her heart, had never been engaged but by one, and on him her fascinations were thrown away. In the number of her suitors, a Mr. Donovan was probably the

most ardent, as he was avowedly the most detested; and as he was a leading character in my father's brief history, we must formally introduce him.

He was descended from an obscure family, became early an orphan, was apprenticed to a trade he disliked, left it without ceremony, and found himself at twenty-two an adventurer on the world, without a single friend or a second guinea. With neither talent, education, or even good looks, to recommend him, he contrived to push his way to a commission through an underhand and dirty channel. His character was not uncommon: low-minded, but cunning, he possessed great self-possession and unmeasured impudence: a bully, without being brave; a swaggerer, but not a gentleman. In every game of chance he was an adept, and lived by shifts and resources, which the unfortunate rage for play among the upper classes, tends to a certain degree to legitimize. Many an unlucky dupe he directed to the road to ruin; and many a time, from disastrous play, himself was reduced to the verge of destitution and despair. Generally disliked, he seldom retained a com-

panion long, for, occasionally, bad temper and bad manners overcame his habitual self-control. Hence he never continued long in a regiment : of course, his rank advanced not, and, a few months before the marriage of my father, he was finally removed from the army, being cashiered for shooting unfairly in a duel a young officer, whom he had plundered to his last guinea.

Mr. Donovan was unhappily no stranger to my father. Four years before, Cæsar Blake had been appointed to a company over his head, which he had made certain, through secret influence, to obtain for himself. Smothering his rage, he marked my father for a victim. He tried play, but the young captain disliked it, and gradually Donovan's character became developed, and Cæsar Blake discovered, fortunately before it was too late to remedy the mischief, that Donovan had nearly estranged him from every officer in the corps. The rage of his dupe was boundless, an explanation was demanded, and a scene ensued. For a moment Donovan essayed the bully : but it failed ; my father was a top shot, and it was quite evident

that, in the event of a meeting, Captain Cæsar Blake would be very apt to shoot his best on the occasion. Mr. Donovan, therefore, prudently left the regiment, and from the moment he departed, his quondam dupe became first favourite with all around him.

When finally forced from the service, he arrived in Dublin without a shilling, and at a moment when his uncle, an opulent tradesman, was on the eve of dissolution. This relative of the disgraced subaltern, had by the most despicable penury accumulated a considerable property. Although childless, he fancied to invest it in purchasing an estate, and he left Connaught to perfect this intention. His nephew had just arrived; he was utterly destitute: he asked assistance, and it was coldly refused.

Fortune is a slippery gentlewoman. Peter Donovan paraded the streets of Dublin for two days, supporting existence by the meanest subterfuges that desperate poverty could invent—and on the third morning he found himself worth two thousand pounds a-year. Wonderful was his luck; he who would not have bestowed a sixpence to save his nephew from the gallows

and who had drafted a will, and laid it before counsel, to guard even against the contingency of his succession, dropped off before the document was arranged for signature, leaving to the person whom he abominated, every shilling which, through a long life, he had by every villany managed to scrape together.

In his appearance Peter Donovan was uncommonly repulsive. He was tall, thin, shapeless, and inelegant; his face sharp, his cheeks hollow, with straight flaxen hair, and light eyes; in short, a *tout ensemble*, that man dislikes and woman loves not.

Such was the suitor who bowed at the shrine of the divinity, who more than once, had scornfully rejected his advances. Then, it is true, he was but a needy adventurer, and “of no estimation”—and Harriette, “fancy free,” was surrounded by a troop of admirers. He came now a wealthy wooer, and found the once haughty fair one in a very different mood to any which he had previously experienced.

Certainly, it required more self-control than Harriette ever pretended that she possessed, to enable her to assume a tolerable composure.

Her overtures were rejected, her love despised, her charms undervalued, and a stranger preferred. One moment, in a storm of jealous rage, she could have stabbed her lover to the heart ; and yet, when the gust of passion calmed down, tender recollections would occupy her thoughts, and she would dwell in tears and tenderness on the hours she had passed with that adored object, who was now lost to her for ever.

She was in this mood when the postman's knock was heard, and her maid handed in a Galway newspaper. Hastily it was opened, and Harriette's quick eye lighted on a flaming paragraph, descriptive of my mother's welcome at Castle Blake, and detailing the various festivities which evidenced the general joy at "the arrival of the rich and beautiful bride." The blood rushed to her face, till the veins were almost bursting. The beauty of her rival, the *éclat* of her reception, drove her nearly frantic. She flung the paper in the fire, and, in a paroxysm of passion, stamped over the carpet. "Cæsar," she muttered, "I loved you as I shall never love another ! I existed only in your presence — I lived upon your

smiles ! I would have followed you to the world's end ! I would have clung to you in beggary—I would have been to you more than woman ever was to man—your mistress—your minion—your slave ! Now, by my hopes of heaven, I would drug the bowl, or whet the knife, that destroyed you !”

She was still in high excitement, when the door unclosed, and unannounced, Donovan stood before her. Flashing eyes and heightened colour bespoke her agitation, but they added to her natural charms—for she looked a beautiful *bacchante*. The man who could have seen such loveliness unmoved, must have been insensible indeed. Short was the interview that succeeded—Donovan offered his hand, and Harriette accepted it.

In a few days she knelt at the altar of God with a being she detested. Her vows of constancy and affection were “false as dicers’ oaths,” and she left the church, a perjured wife and wretched woman !

CHAPTER VII.

FRENCH LANDING.—NIGHT ADVENTURE.

But here I leave the general concern,
To track our hero on his path of fame—

* * * * *

The dying man cried, 'Hold! I 've got my gruel!'

DON JUAN.

TIME passed rapidly ; month succeeded month, and the mountain retreat of Cæsar Blake bloomed in all its beauty. The eventful summer of Ninety-eight had set in with unusual sultriness, for it was the hottest that the oldest man could recollect. For weeks together, not a shower refreshed the parched earth, and a cloudless sun shone with an intensity, that appeared better suited to a southern sky, than to the humid and capricious climate of the Emerald Isle. The insurrection, which

for the past year had been on the eve of explosion, suddenly broke out upon the twenty-third of May, and after a continued scene of ferocious crime, in which a savage population and an excited soldiery, seemed to emulate each other in deeds of blood and rapine, it was suppressed, although, for many a month afterwards, the country was devastated by banditti, and the towns disgraced by military executions.

The ferocious character of the Irish rebellion was not without exceptions. The Western insurgents were of milder mood than their Leinster brethren; and plunder was the chief crime that marked the out-breaking of the peasantry in Connaught. Few lives were consequently lost among the loyalists, although the vengeance of the executive descended with frightful severity on the miserable adherents of the French, after the republican troops had surrendered at Ballinamuck.

Until the landing of Humbert, the ex-major remained quietly in his romantic dwelling—and from its remoteness, but vague reports of scenes of violence elsewhere transacted, reached this secluded family. While others left their

houses, and flocked into garrison towns for protection, Cæsar Blake dwelt in his mountain-home without any apprehension. Indeed, he had little to fear: the shepherds and fishermen who lived among the hills, or occupied the little village on an inlet of the sea, contiguous to the lodge, were utterly unacquainted with passing events, and knew and cared about the progress of the insurrection as little, as though the scene had been placed in Japan.

As my father's isolated residence was entirely out of the line of operations of either royalists or rebels, he had nothing to apprehend but from straggling plunderers, and his own followers were quite sufficient to repel any aggression of that kind. Hence, in his highland retreat, he remained in undisturbed tranquillity; and while the storm was raging at a distance, the glen that contained his youthful bride was a sort of Goshen, where the danger that menaced life and property elsewhere was unknown.

It may be readily imagined, that the gallant major was not of a temper to remain inactive when martial scenes were passing in his fatherland, had not other feelings restrained his mili-

tary ardour. To leave the timid and beloved stranger with none but servants to comfort and protect her in the wild dwelling in which he had placed her, would have been cruel and unmanly. As yet, no overt acts of violence had occurred ; and it seemed, judging from appearances, that unnecessary alarm had been raised, and useless severity exercised by those functionaries to whom government had confided the safety of the country. Cæsar Blake, moreover, felt that he had been, on the occasion of his recent retirement from his regiment, very indifferently treated by the commander-in-chief ; he considered himself an ill-used man, and resolved to remain a quiet spectator of a popular commotion, that he felt persuaded had been fostered for sinister purposes by those in power, who had ample means of suppression in their hands, so soon as the political objects for which the storm was raised should be effected.

But these resolutions were at once abandoned, when a trusty courier brought him intelligence that the French had landed in force at Killalla. Love and pique were overcome by the master-passion of a soldier, and he deter-

mined to set off, without delay, for the headquarters of the royalists at Castlebar, and join some regiment as a volunteer, until a battle should decide the fate of the bold invaders, and prove how far a French demonstration could produce a general outbreking of the disaffected. Leaving his little garrison under the charge of Denis O'Brien, he feigned an apology for a short absence, by pretending that important business called him suddenly to Castle Blake, and took a tender farewell of the gentle Ellen, who little imagined that her adored husband was leaving her arms for a battle-field.

Cæsar Blake selected the cool of evening for crossing the mountains that divided the neighbouring garrison from his highland home. The dew was rising from the fen, the moon was dancing on the lake, and never had a lovelier evening closed upon the romantic valley he was quitting. Mounted on a trained and powerful charger, with pistols in his holsters, a sabre at his side, and a small valise behind the saddle, to contain a change of linen, the soldier, with his military-cloak flung round him, rode unattended along the path, which wound through

the hills for several miles, before it reached the main road. All was silent as the grave, and nothing was heard at this sweet hour, but the challenge of the cock-grouse, or bleatings from the sheep-pens. Now and again the shepherd's dog, roused by the hoof-sounds of the traveller, alarmed the tenants of the lonely *bouillie* ;* but all else was quiet as the grave, and without interruption the belated traveller reached the defile, which united the mountain-path with the road that led to his destination.

This gorge into the hill-country was formed by a deep ravine between cliffs of grey limestone. The moonlight was shaded by the rocks, and the pass was dark and embarrassed by loose stones which had fallen from the face of the heights. The horseman was consequently obliged to ride with caution, and at a deliberate pace he entered the defile.

He had reached the centre of the pass when the foot-falls of an advancing traveller were heard. It was an awkward place to meet an enemy. My father tightened his reins, and

* *Bouillies*, are summer bivouacs, used by shepherds when depasturing their flocks in the mountains.

drew a pistol from the holster, and next moment a rider appeared through the gloom.

“ Who goes there ?” demanded the soldier.

“ Who are you ?” responded the unknown horseman.

“ Advance a step and I fire !” rejoined the major.

“ That liberty I ’ll take first,” was the cool reply, as a pistol flashed, and a bullet whistled past my father.

Cæsar was no sluggard. Promptly the fire was returned, and forcing his horse forward with the spur, in a second he was sword-in-hand alongside his assailant, ready to cut him down.

“ Hold !” cried a voice, with a groan. “ Your sword is needless, friend. The pistol did its duty. That shot broke my arm, and I surrender. But, good God ! whom have we here ? What ! Cæsar Blake ?”

“ The same—Conolly ! Is it possible ?” and the riders mutually recognised each other.

“ What a cursed chance !” exclaimed the wounded horseman. “ Who the devil could have expected that you should at this late

hour be wandering among the mountains. That scarlet cloak deceived me, and I took you for a patrol."

"And what brings you here, Conolly? No treason, I trust?"

"Why, my dear Cæsar, the truth may fairly out. I am sped for many a long day; and as the French say, *hors de combat*. Humbert is advancing on Castlebar, and I was despatched from head-quarters to visit you, and raise the Galway people."

"*Me!*"

"Ay—you. No folly with friends. I know your heart is with us, and I have a splendid offer from the general. Why, man, you shall be '*en second*,' to himself!"

"Conolly, is this a time for fooling?" said the major.

"Fooling!" replied the disabled rider. "Heaven knows I am in sorry humour for that to-night. Why my arm is shattered, and lies as useless by my side as the scabbard of your sabre. No, faith, I know you are with us; for Donovan apprised General Hutchinson, that you were to hold a principal command. This

you may depend on, for it comes through a secret agent, that acquaints us with all the drunken hogs are twaddling about, and the channel is sure."

"Conolly, you are sadly misinformed. I am at this moment on my way to join the king's troops, and old George has not a more devoted follower."

"Humph! After all he used you scurvily enough, if that blanket and chimney business be as it was generally represented," said the stranger, with a sneer.

"No matter. I swore allegiance to old square-toes. That oath with me is sacred. Not but that I wish the good old gentleman had better military counsellors."

"You would not, however, betray me, Blake?"

"No more than sell my soul to the foul fiend."

"I thought so," said the stranger.

"I am," replied the soldier, "a loyal subject, but no spy to divulge the secret which a feather-headed friend communicated, without taking the trouble of asking whether I was with or against him."

“Alas ! Cæsar, I am completely bothered.”

“Be advised, my dear fellow, by me,” returned the soldier. “Hasten to the lodge. Say you have been riding in the dark ; that your horse came down, and your arm was broken, and you want it attended to. Remain quietly until the storm blows over, and you will not only save your limb, but most probably your neck into the bargain.”

The wounded man was silent for a minute.

“You are right, friend Cæsar. I am useless now, and would only be an incumbrance. There are old women enough on both sides without me, and I should be an ass to stretch a rope, without the sorry satisfaction of striking a blow or two before I graced the gallows. But time presses you and me. Ride—for before twelve hours, the French will enter Castlebar.”

“Nonsense,” replied the soldier.

“Nay, honest Cæsar, it is true. And now, God speed you ! I shall follow your advice, and avail myself of your kindness. A time may come ; but no matter.”

“Shall I be interrupted ?” asked the royalist.

“Likely enough,” replied the wounded horse-

man. "If you are stopped, enquire if 'the moon is near the full.' But ask the question *in Irish*. I must be off, for I can hardly keep the saddle. Confound you, Cæsar! how close you shoot, where none beside yourself and the owls can know a man from a haystack. And yet I levelled at you pretty correctly."

"Too close to be agreeable," replied the royalist; "I heard the whistle of the bullet."

"Well, that same is a comfort," said the wounded traveller. "There is a friendly hut not very distant, where I shall get my arm bandaged. And now, God speed thee! worthy descendant of a lucky Roman. Farewell." And turning his horse, the unfortunate cavalier rode off in an opposite direction to that taken by his opponent.

When my father cleared the defile, he found himself in safety on the coach-road. All danger was over; for the king's troops, no doubt, took care to keep the communication open. The major pricked merrily on, until about a mile from the mountain-pass, a long and narrow bridge, with its high and ill-constructed battlements, crossed a bold river. Built in the ancient style, its

centre-arch rose so considerably as to shut from even a mounted traveller a prospect of the extremity. Cæsar rode forward without apprehension, until on topping the crown of the bridge, he found his further progress barred by a crowd of men, whose various implements of destruction glanced in the moonlight, and told at once that they were of the insurgent party. The soldier reined up, and would have fallen back, but suddenly the other end of the bridge was occupied, and retreat impracticable. There was no time for deliberation; the enemy was before and behind him; the chances of danger pretty equal; and, like a good soldier, he chose that in front. Drawing his second pistol, he advanced steadily within a few paces of those who occupied the pass, when a rough voice in very indifferent English challenged him.

“ Who goes there ? ”

“ A friend.”

“ Whose friend are ye ? ”

“ The king’s.”

“ You are a prisoner then,” said a person who appeared the leader, dressed in a frieze great

coat, and armed with a musket, which he presented at the traveller.

“ A prisoner ! To whom, pray ? ” was the firm reply.

“ *To us Frinch !* ” replied a second voice in broad Irish.

My father laughed heartily at the absurdity of the fellow.

“ Stand back, fools ! ” he replied in their native language ; “ is the moon near the full, pray ? ”

“ Pass on — *ballagh, faugh a ballagh !* ” * exclaimed a score of voices, as they opened right and left. Mending his pace, the rider pushed on rapidly, and in an hour the lights in Castlebar appeared flaring in the paler moonshine.

It struck the soldier as a remarkable want of military precaution, that, while it was known that a hostile force was in the neighbourhood, neither picket nor patrol were on the roads that led directly to the garrison. Close to the entrance of the town, for the first

* *Anglicè*, “ Clear the road.”

time, a yeomanry vidette challenged him ; but my father being personally known, prevented the loyalist from offering him any interruption, and unquestioned by any other, the major rode on, and halted at the barrack-gate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESS TABLE—MARCH OF HUMBERT.

Who knocks so loud, and knocks so late ?

SCOTT.

In Heaven's name let us get some supper now,
And then I'm with you, if you're for a row.

Don Juan.

“ *WHA* gangs there ?” cried a Highlander, advancing his arms.

“ A friend,” replied my father ; “ open the gate ; I wish to speak with the general.”

“ Guard, turn out !” exclaimed the sentinel.
“ Guard, turn out !” responded a second voice within. An immediate shuffling of feet and rattling of muskets succeeded, and apprised the late traveller that considerable ceremony would attend his untimely visit to the commander of the garrison. Presently an officer appeared at the wicket, and demanded his name

and business. My father answered that he was a loyalist, and his business was private and momentous. "I suspect, notwithstanding," replied the Scotchman, "that ye stand a poor chance of seeing the generals to-night; they dinna much like to talk with strangers over their wine: but I'll go see."

After an absence of some minutes, "the Highland ancient" reappeared with a peremptory refusal. "The generals," he said, "would na be disturbed; it was na time, they said, to fash them wi' business—it would be time eneugh to-morrow." But the traveller was not to be repulsed by one refusal.

"The morning will be too late," he said; "give that card to General H——, and tell him I bear important intelligence which may require the promptest consideration."

A still longer time elapsed than when on his first embassy, before the commander of the guard returned.

"All's right," he said to the sentry; "Duncan, open the wee gate: lead in your horse, friend—and I'll conduct ye to the generals."

“ The generals !—What, are any here besides general H —— ? ”

“ Aye, troth, are there : gin they be gude as plenty, we will be guy an weel commanded ; and if they strike but half as hard as they drink, the de’il himsel’ will na match them for a minute.”

As he spoke, the major and his conductor reached the building where the commanders were assembled. Loud and tipsy merriment was heard within ; and if Cæsar Blake expected to have found the gallant leaders of the king’s troops concerting military movements over the midnight lamp, he must have been marvellously disappointed. Passing a sentry at the door, and half a dozen orderlies loitering about the corridor, the ex-major was directed to the end of the hall ; a mess-waiter in attendance opened a door, announced his name, and ushered him into the presence.

Albeit, though Cæsar himself had not been indoctrinated in military tactics at the feet of the most rigid disciplinarian, yet he was shocked and disgusted to witness a very unexpected

scene. Though the country was in a state of insurrection, and an invading army within a few hours' march, he found the royalist commanders revelling at the mess-table, surrounded by their aids-de-camp and field-officers. There was scarcely an individual at the board who did not betray unequivocal symptoms of inebriety. Two personages were already *hors de combat* beneath the table—and others so far advanced towards that comfortable condition, as to warrant a safe conclusion that a similar fate awaited them. On glancing round the room, my father remarked two or three country gentlemen who commanded yeomanry corps intermingled with the regular bacchanalians, and caught the cadaverous scowl of Captain Donovan furtively directed at himself. Conolly's intelligence crossed his memory, and he darted a withering look at the husband of the inconstant Harriette; but the voice of General H—— recalled his attention from his quondam acquaintance.

“Cæsar, noblest of Romans!”—(hiccup)—
“take a chair, fill a bumper, and then tell us

what the devil drives you here ?” was the singular address.

“Hearing,” replied the major, “of the landing at Killala, I deemed it my duty to join his majesty’s troops as a volunteer, and on my way to head-quarters, accidentally learned some news that appeared sufficiently important to warrant this late and unceremonious intrusion.”

“What may the news be ?” inquired one of the general officers, with a carelessness that half implied derision.

“Am I to communicate my intelligence *here* ? Possibly it might suit a smaller audience,” replied Cæsar Blake.

“All here, sir,” returned the commander haughtily, “are the king’s officers, or their faithful allies and fellow-soldiers ; we have no secrets from either.”

“Enough, sir,” said the traveller ; “my intelligence simply is, that the French are on their march, and Humbert moving rapidly on the town with all his disposable force.”

“Ha-ha-ha !” roared the generals. “Ha-ha-ha !” repeated the aids-de-camp. “Ha-

ha-ha!" re-echoed the captains of the yeomanry.

My father's cheek reddened. In a voice where suppressed rage was scarcely concealed, he replied——

"Were my information valueless, methinks at least it might have been received with that civility which the communications of one gentleman to another require and obtain. Pray, general, should this intelligence prove correct, would a French movement on the town be an event worth military consideration?"

"Undoubtedly, most gallant Roman, it would surprise us all. But sit down and wash the cobwebs from thy throat"—(for my father still continued standing;) "we may probably go to look for Humbert, but, believe me, Humbert will not come to look for us. Why, man, our advanced guard would be sufficient to cut him to pieces. Where, my friend, did you learn this idle story?"

"General H——," said my father, with seriousness, "you admit it to be of momentous consequence if true: now, from a source which I shall not disclose, but which I pledge a soldier's

honour is worthy to be implicitly relied upon, I learned it ; and you are now apprized of what I believe to be a fact, and it is for you and these gentlemen to act as you please.”

The decisive tone of the ex-major appeared to create a sensation.

“ And you consider your intelligence authentic ?” enquired General H——.

“ Can you doubt it ?” observed General T—, with a sneer. “ If report speaks true, none should be better informed of insurrectionary movements than the worthy major.”

My father made two strides from the place where he had been standing, and confronted the last speaker.

“ You will please to recollect, sir, that I am no longer subordinate to any, and that I acknowledge no superior in this room. I feel your taunt, and am no stranger to the rancorous source from which it emanated. Now, general, I shall briefly tell you what I am—a gentleman of as stainless honour and ancient blood as any that bears the King’s commission ; and furthermore, as true and devoted a subject. Does any here question my loyalty ? ’Tis well—I should have

told him to his teeth he lied. I know that at this table sits one villain ; let him follow me outside the gate, and he shall there know how far my hand can defend my honour. You have now my tidings, gentlemen, such as they be, and to-morrow will tell whether they are false or true. Good night."

" Stop, stay, my dear fellow !" cried General H——, " d—n it, man, no offence was offered. I like your spirit—(hiccup.) You have been misinformed. But fill a glass—devilish sound claret—(hiccup). Depend upon it that all's right, and in a day or two you shall have a sight of the blue-coats, unless they have re-embarked already. Come, sit down."

" Excuse me, General. Farewell, sir," he continued, addressing the commanding officer who had so broadly insinuated his disloyalty. " A word at parting : when the scoundrel who traduced me next tells you that I am disaffected, whisper in his ear, that Cæsar Blake holds him to be a cold-blooded, gambling, murderous coward ; and tell him, I would part with this right hand to free the world from such a miscreant as I believe him to be ! Adieu, gentle-

men: before to-morrow's noon you will decide whether my intelligence was fabrication, and whether you should have noticed the warning you have received."

So saying, he flung himself from the mess-room, leaving the bacchanalian group in great confusion and uncertainty. But this indecision lasted but for a moment, and the ex-major's alarm vanished with the next cooper. Daylight broke upon them ere they separated, as, with few exceptions, they were respectively carried to their quarters by the orderlies in waiting.

When my father reached the gate, he found the subaltern waiting his return. His horse was standing at the guard-house door, covered with a watch-coat, and a highlander hand-rubbing him carefully.

"He 's a bra' beast," said the commander of the gate, "an' it would be a pity to neglect him. I feared he might tak' cauld, so I threw a coat about him. I did anither job too; one o' yeir pistels wanted loadin', so I took the leeburty of tightening the flint and sticking in a cartridge. Here, man, tak' a drap—it's right Nantz—better brandy niver topped a

tongue: 'twill do ye gude, for the dew is rising heavy."

The kindness of the Scotch soldier struck my father forcibly.

"Thank you, comrade," he said; "possibly after to-morrow, you and I shall be better acquainted. This is my address;" and he handed him a card.

The Scotch ancient applied the address to a guard-room lantern, and with slow and precise intonation pronounced, "Maajor Cæsar Blake;" then lifting his eyes slowly he said in an under-voice, "Ha'e ye any news, maa-jor?"

"None," said the traveller, as he tightened his girths, and led his horse through the wicket. "But," and he laid his lips to the Highlander's ear, "before six hours you may have an unexpected visiter, and, I fear, but a drunken reception to welcome him with."

Donald paused, and scratched his head; "I ken it a'," he muttered; "aye, troth, it's like eneugh; I feared as much before it:" and he wrung my father's hand and they parted.

When the major rode from the gate, he

began to consider where he was to seek a lodging. Two o'clock pealed from the jail clock, and he remembered that every inn and public-house was filled to the very garrets, while private residences were crowded with numbers of refugees, who flocked for safety from the adjacent country. In this difficulty he recollected that a female relative still remained at home, and occupied her mansion, while others, less exposed, had been abandoned; and as his horse was untired, he decided upon riding out to his kinswoman's, rather than institute, at this early hour of the morning, a tedious, and perhaps bootless research after a bed and stable. Accordingly, as he had been furnished with the parole and countersign by his Highland friend, the traveller found no difficulty in passing a few straggling videttes, and in less than an hour, drew bridle before his kinswoman's door.

The late summons of the ex-major occasioned considerable alarm, and he was reconnoitred from divers spy-holes, until his identity was satisfactorily ascertained. Then was he freely admitted; his horse stabled, fed, littered, and

left to his repose ; while the master, in due honour, was welcomed by his fair relative, and found a supper waiting for him, that after his long ride was highly acceptable.

When the traveller had sufficiently refreshed himself, his hostess urged him to retire, and endeavour to procure a little sleep ; but the morning sun was streaming through the curtains of the room, and my father preferred to lay down without undressing for an hour or two on a sofa. It was well that he so determined. In less than half an hour, a horse at speed entered the court-yard ; the family rapidly collected ; and the rider's communication at once assured my father that the French were actually advancing, and by a very different route to that by which they might have been expected.

The pontoon-road, which skirts the beautiful and picturesque shores of Lough Conn, and connects the towns of Castlebar and Ballina, was not then formed, nor was there a bridge over the confluence of the lakes, the passage being effected by means of a bateau or punt, from which the road appears to have derived its name. At that time there were two routes

by which Castlebar could be approached from the north. By the left, the lower, or Foxford one, afforded an easy line of march to an army with cannon and field equipage. On the right of the lakes, the second communication was opened by the old mountain road. But this route was hilly and difficult, and intersected by numerous highland streams, many of which being without bridges, presented fords barely passable by a horseman, but impracticable to every species of carriage. Nearly mid-way, this road cuts the mountain-chain that rises from the shores of the lake, and winds through the romantic pass of Barnagee. Here, for nearly two miles, the line is a succession of defiles, overhung by masses of rock, scarped along the brows of precipices, and everywhere commanded by heights which enfilade its entire extent. To transport the *matériel* of an army along this line would be impossible. Hence, the lower road was the only one deemed worth the trouble of observation, and beyond patrolling it for two or three miles without the town, the mountain-line was totally neglected.

When Humbert decided to march direct on Castlebar, he was well aware of the great disparity of his own force, compared with that of the royalists. He mustered about nine hundred infantry, some fifty hussars, with two brass six-pounders; these, from the lightness of their carriages, termed "curricie guns." Upon the guerilla mob that would accompany him, he reckoned little. They were numerous, it is true, and partially clothed and appointed by the republicans; but, out of the field, they were impatient of control and difficult to organize; and in it, nothing but an armed rabble. Opposed to him was a regular force of fully three thousand men of all arms, with several hundred irregulars attached, who in discipline might be inferior to troops of the line, but in spirit second to none in the service. The cavalry were numerous and well-mounted; the artillery highly efficient; while, confident in numbers, fresh, in position, and well aware of the smallness of the force that threatened them, the loyalists had every advantage. They knew that an immense force was marching to their support, and converging

on every point whereon it was possible for the French general to operate. The roads were good, the communications open, and the yeomanry corps perfectly acquainted with the localities of the country, and therefore admirable guides for a commander to depend upon. With such a force opposed, and having these local and contingent advantages, it was a bold and hazardous determination of the French general to become assailant—nothing to rely on but his own abilities, and no resources but in the tried bravery of a handful of veterans.

Humbert was aware that he must strike an immediate blow, no matter how much the chances of success might be against him. To attempt to organize his rebel allies would have been absurd; for in a few days an overwhelming force would have been upon him. His only hope therefore was, in making a powerful impression; and to confirm the disaffected, or maintain himself in the country, turned on the success of a prompt and desperate attempt on Castlebar. Accordingly, at midnight, he marched from Ballina, by the lower road. This movement, as he anticipated, was directly discover-

ed, and intelligence despatched to apprise the English generals. To mask his true route, Humbert kept the Foxford line for several miles; but suddenly wheeling to the right, by a cross road, he turned his face to the hills, and falling into the mountain-path, advanced on Castlebar by the defiles of Barnagee.

Fortune favours the bold—a single gun, a company of light infantry, could have held him in check, and maintained the pass, until he must have been crushed by superior numbers, or driven back on Ballina; and the latter, in its consequences, would have been as ruinous as the former.

It was a singular chance, that my father was fated to bring confirmation of the tidings which, a few hours before, had been so unceremoniously declared unworthy of belief. The house of his relative was situated at the bottom of the hill through which the pass of Barnagee winds, and, from its remote locality, had not been deserted by the occupants, as other mansions were, on the first intelligence of a French descent. A servant had, on the preceding evening, been despatched to see that the cattle

on a distant farm were in safety. On his return with the first light, he observed from a high ground, the arms of the advancing troops glittering in the earliest sunbeams that topped the summit of the hills. Without stopping to observe their numbers or appearance, he spurred on to give his mistress notice, and thus enable her to reach the garrison of Castlebar; and a more unexpected and alarming messenger never disturbed a household than honest Bryan, when he announced that “the French, horse and foot, were at his heels at Barnagee.”

My father promptly mounted his horse, and rode off to ascertain the fact: none of the domestics had any fancy to lessen the distance between themselves and the invaders, and the gallant major made his *reconnaissance* alone.

He rode rapidly to the pass: not a human being was visible, and the country was more quiet even than on ordinary occasions; but when he gained the crown of the defile, a large body of men in blue uniforms, was seen moving rapidly on in close column.

It was quite apparent to the practised eye of a soldier, that the regulars were accompanied by

a large insurgent mob, and it was difficult to say what part of these allies appeared the most contemptible. The clownish and unsoldierly look of those whom the invaders had clothed, was most ridiculous, and contrasted with the villanous and banditti character, that cross-belts over frieze jackets gave to the remainder of the rabble.

Cæsar Blake pressed forward, and gained a height that commanded an uninterrupted view. At the bottom of this hill a mountain-torrent had formed a deep ravine across the road, and the soldier suspected, that Humbert would find no inconsiderable difficulty in transporting his cannon over this formidable chasm ; nor was he wrong. After a considerable delay, he saw one gun extricated by immense exertion, but the carriage of the other broke down : every attempt to disengage it was useless, and the impatient Frenchman spiked and abandoned it, and continued his march with but a solitary six-pounder.

The *reconnaissance* of my father had been noticed, and some well-mounted men detached from the main body spurred up the hill ; but as Cæsar had already ascertained correctly the

number and description of the French force, he had nothing more to learn, and rode off to announce the veritable march of Humbert.

His horse, in fine condition and sufficiently rested, carried him forward at a slapping pace ; and within six hours, as he had prophesied, from the period of his first visit, he re-entered the barrack-gates of Castlebar, to herald the rapid advance of the small but formidable corps.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROUT OF CASTLEBAR.

And there was mounting in hot haste ; the steed,
 The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
 Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
 And swiftly forming in the ranks of war ;
 And the deep thunder, peal on peal afar ;
 And near, the beat of the alarming drum
 Roused up the soldier ere the morning star ;
 While thronged the citizens, with terror dumb,
 Whispering with white lips—"The foe! they come ! they
 come!" *Childe Harold.*

"Long life to yee'r noble honor ! May ye live all yee'r days, an' nobody kill ye !" exclaimed an old beggar-woman, as she trotted down Sackville-street after General ——, who was reckoned no hero. "Am'int I bound night an' day to pray for ye, since ye saved my son's life at Castlebar?"—" *I save him ?* I forget the circumstance."—"Ogh, but yee'r mimrie's bad, an' more the pity. Why, Gimirel, *you ran first, and Pat ran after you !*"

JOE MILLER.

Two hours after my father had left the British generals in full carouse, a yeoman brought certain intelligence of Humbert's midnight march. He had seen him advancing by

the lower road, and of course concluded that his approach would be by Foxford. Roused from their drunken slumbers, the commanders would scarcely credit the account given by the loyalist ; but my father's conviction of the accuracy of his own information tallied with the yeoman's news, and at last they condescended to believe it possible, that the French were actually on their march to attack the town. A body of carbineers and light cavalry were hurriedly despatched upon the lower road, to observe the expected enemy, while the drums beat, and the troops got under arms.

The scene which the barrack-yard presented was not flattering to the military character of the commanders ; there was a general confusion everywhere apparent—an absence of regularity—almost a panic, that would have disgraced a brigade of yeomanry. To judge from the hurried preparations, one would have imagined that an overwhelming force threatened the garrison with destruction, nor ever dreamed that those symptoms of alarm, were occasioned by the advance of an enemy so numerically and physically inferior. But my father was not permitted

to make further observations. An aid-de-camp summoned him to the room where the generals were assembled; and there he found them in council, with their respective staffs, and the officers commanding the artillery and cavalry.

It was quite evident that all were in a different mood, to that in which he found them on his former visit; they were under feelings, in which self-reproach and some alarm might be detected by an acute observer. Never were men worse prepared for calm but determined action; nervous, irritable, and suffering from the effects of recent debauch, they could form no decisive plan, or issue an intelligible order.

“Your information was correct, Major Blake,” said General H——, as he offered his hand to my father.

“Had I not been well assured of its accuracy, believe me, sir, I should have been sorry to disturb you so unseasonably as I did,” was the reply; “I only have to regret, that my intelligence was not considered last night as important as it proves to be this morning.”

“I really cannot yet discover its momentous importance,” observed General T——, with a

sneer; “the gallant major apprized us of what it was probable Humbert might do, but a worthy yeoman has told us what he has actually done.” My father bowed coldly, while the commander proceeded:—“From his satisfactory report, we have made the necessary arrangements. It is idle to waste more words, and the sooner we move the better. We are perfectly agreed as to our position, General H——?”

“Oh, certainly.”

“Might I, without being guilty of presumption, enquire where you intend to oppose the enemy?” said my father to General H——, who seemed anxious to make reparation, for the scepticism with which he had received his tidings on the late visit.

“I cannot consent,” replied General T——, “that time should be wasted, while the curiosity of every private gentleman shall be gratified, who expresses a wish to canvass our intended operations.”

My father coloured, and to the astonishment of all, sarcastically replied,—“It may be true that my apparent curiosity merits the rebukes,

which on more than one occasion, I have received from the gallant general. But, as I suspect that I shall change every part of his very able arrangements, I must take the liberty of repeating the question. I hope for an answer from General H——. To him, and none other, do I address myself, and from him alone will I expect a reply. Is yonder gentleman your informant?" and he pointed to a yeoman in attendance.

The general answered in the affirmative, while the aids-de-camp and field-officers closed round, to witness the result of what appeared a very singular scene.

"May I ask you, sir," said Cæsar Blake, as he addressed the loyalist, "*when* you last saw Humbert, and *where* you conceive he may be now?"

"I saw his advanced cavalry at the two-mile-stone, on the Foxford road, and," as he looked at his watch, "he may now be within five or six miles of Castlebar."

"You are pretty correct," said the ex-major. A sneer crossed the features of General T—. "And on what road is he advancing?"

“*What road?*” returned the yeoman with a stare; “what, but the Foxford one? Would you have him swim up the lakes, or fly over the mountains?” General T—— laughed heartily at the brusque reply, in which his staff, as in duty bound, united.

But Cæsar Blake abridged this merriment. “General H——,” he said, “I must bear testimony to the truth of this gentleman’s statement. I have no doubt whatever that he saw the French *à la distance*, and at the second mile-stone too; and, moreover, he has guessed their present distance with amazing accuracy. But as to *where* they are, he knows about as much as the gallant general who is so tickled with his humour.”

All started. “And in the devil’s name *where are they?*” exclaimed General H——; while the countenances of the military conclave expressed unqualified astonishment.

“They are moving by the mountain-road, and over the pass of Barnagee; unless they met more difficulties than I can anticipate.”

“H—ll and fury!” roared General H——, “we have sent our cavalry on the wrong road.

Off, Phillips," to an aid-de-camp, "ride for your life and recall them. My dear fellow, you are fated to be our guardian angel. Give us the particulars."

"Willingly, sir. But the sooner your infantry commence moving, the better. I never saw faster marchers than the blue-coats. Of course you will meet them outside the town?"

"Assuredly. Go," to an aid-de-camp, "see the troops marched off without delay. And now the detail."

"When I left the barrack this morning," continued the ex-major, "I found that to obtain accommodation in the town would be impossible, and rode out to the house of Carrow Keel. A herdsman, who had been despatched on the preceding evening to ascertain the security of cattle on a distant farm, observed the French advance from a high ground, and gave the alarm. I rode off to reconnoitre and satisfy myself whether his report was correct or not. From the summit of Barnagee, I saw the enemy advancing, and waited there to ascertain their force. The ravine at the bottom of the hill checked the movement of the column. Their can-

non stuck fast, and after much labour and delay, they only succeeded in bringing one gun across, and the other was abandoned. They are about a thousand infantry, a troop of hussars, with one curricule gun. And now, gentlemen, you have my news."

"By heaven, you astonish me!" exclaimed General H—— passionately; "let us mount and be doing. Blake, we owe you much."

"You owe me nothing, sir," said the ex-major haughtily. "I was once the King's soldier, and, however his worthy generals may deem proper to suspect my fidelity, had I one drop of rebel blood within my veins, I would shed it with as great satisfaction as that of any man," and my father's eye turned on General T——, "no matter what his rank might be, who for a moment dared to question my devoted loyalty."

"Come, come, my dear friend," said General H——, interrupting him, "sincerely I ask your pardon, for not treating your intelligence as it well merited. You shall act as my extra aide-camp."

"Excuse me, general; I once held the King's

commission, and, if I keep my present sentiments, I shall never again subject myself to the insult I once received, in being obliged to retire on a flimsy pretext. I shall, notwithstanding, do my duty, and serve as a volunteer, until the issue of this day is over. Here is my friend, Captain Shortall; he may require a well-mounted messenger, and I shall attach myself to him."

"Just as you please, sir," replied General H——, in turn offended at my father's rejection of acting on his staff. All left the room to accompany the troops, who were filing quickly off, and marching on *the Gap* road.

Cæsar Blake was speedily alongside the commandant of artillery.

"A pretty piece of work these twaddlers have made of it!" said Captain Shortall; "but for your arrival we should have been in full march for Foxford, and politely vacated this good town for the peaceable occupation of Monsieur Humbert. By heaven! Blake, it is too bad, that fellows are entrusted with commands, who are as incompetent to perform their duties as yonder drum-boy. And that sulky ass T——, how heartily I enjoyed his mortifi-

cation ! Would you believe it, he had the assurance yesterday, to point out some imaginary defect in the limbers of my guns ! A fellow that scarcely knows a cascabel from a cartouch-box. Are the French so few, and have they but a single field-piece ?”

“ I measured them with my eye,” returned Cæsar Blake, “ while they marched more than a mile ; they were in column, and I have seen a strong regiment cover more ground. They had but two guns ; one of them they abandoned in a gully, for I saw them attach the horses to the limber of that they disengaged, and with this assistance carry it over the pass.”

“ We should annihilate them—” said Shortall ; “ and yet, Blake, I have a strange misgiving as to the result. Look at the Longfords there,” and he pointed out a militia-regiment marching immediately in the rear of the guns. “ How sulky the scoundrels look ! Were they well-affected, they would go into action with other countenances. I trust I may be wrong, but I fear a disastrous issue from drunken generals and disaffected soldiers. But here, as it would

appear, is to be our position ;” as the leading regiments deployed to the left off the road, adjacent to the village of Roebawn. “Every man to his own trade,” continued the captain of artillery. “Ay, let me see”—and he laid a telescope to his eye. “Fifty yards farther, the guns will have yonder height, which the road crosses, within good round-shot range”—and Shortall unlimbered and prepared for action.

The position taken up was badly chosen, and worse defended. Part of the infantry were injudiciously extended, and another was crowded together, and from want of space, unable to deploy. The extreme left was the weakest point, as in front and flank the ground was covered with rocks and thickets, which would favour an enemy’s advance, unless occupied with light infantry and sharpshooters. Here, by a singular stupidity, two raw Irish regiments were placed in line, where an able officer would have posted the best troops he could rely upon. As the cavalry came up, they were stationed in the rear of the right and centre ; but from the nature of the ground they remained non-combatants.

The whole front of the position was broken rocky, and difficult, and no place could have been better chosen for the operations of irregular troops. A numerous body of yeomanry and gentlemen volunteers had attached themselves to the garrison of Castlebar. They were capital marksmen, bold, hardy, and enthusiastic, and admirably adapted for every purpose of guerilla warfare ; while in line, from want of discipline, they could be of little service. With these skirmishers, the generals might have thickly covered their front and flank. But this advantage was overlooked ; and the two arms, in which they were most powerful, and their assailant miserably deficient,—cavalry and sharpshooters, were never employed.

How truly the drama of life may be termed serio-comic, and how often do the most ridiculous events interrupt its gravest business ! The dispositions of the English commandant had been just completed, when, over the rising ground, in front of the guns, a man in a sort of hussar jacket, was seen careering at full speed. His appearance at first was so equivocal, that a score of muskets were levelled,

before he was recognized to be a member of a corps of mounted yeomanry. His dress and hurry bespoke mortal terror; his belts were crossed on the wrong side, and reversing the usual mode of putting a helmet on, he had placed the peak behind, apparently to protect his rear. His own alarm had extended to the steed, who was running his best, while every bound of the horseman's scabbard urged him to increased velocity. On he came, as if determined to charge the guns, till, fortunately, when within twenty yards, an open field-gate allowed the steed to bolt, which he did so suddenly, as to tilt the rider into a deep ditch. The fall, however, was so cleverly accomplished, that this brave auxiliary received no personal damage. "Murder! Murder!" he ejaculated as he gathered himself up, "it's a wonder they did not catch me; there's twenty thousand of them at the bottom of the brae!"

The information of the unlucky chasseur only elicited a roar of laughter; and the holy warrior—for he was a churchman—bustled to the rear as fast as his own portliness and want of wind would permit.

At this moment another horseman crossed the ridge, and rode rapidly down the road. "This looks more like business," said Shortall to my father; as the vidette came on at a long trot, and announced the immediate approach of the enemy.

A dead silence was observed—five minutes passed — suddenly the bear-skin caps of the French grenadiers rose over the ridge of the hill, and the head of the column, filling the whole breadth of the road, displayed itself!

The guns had been carefully laid, and Shortall threw his eye along the right-hand piece — "Fire!" he said deliberately — the gun flashed—its sullen boom was repeated by the mountain echoes, as its round-shot pitched with beautiful precision directly into the column, knocking over half a dozen files. Instantly the French fell back over the shelter of the hill to re-form. Short was the respite. The bear-skin caps crossed the ridge again, and again the roar of the gun was heard, and the same effect obliged the column to retire.

Humbert, when he was a second time repulsed, covering the French with a body of insur-

gents in blue uniforms, pushed them forward, under the leading of a favourite aid-de-camp. The column again appeared, and a third shot falling upon the road, raised a cloud of dust, and in its *ricochet*, ploughed through the dense mass. This was the most fatal discharge; the rebels broke, ran off tumultuously, and the French fell back to re-form.

Three rounds of a six-pounder had half defeated Humbert, and the battle was nearly won. When the French general had first seen the troops before him, he would have fallen back upon the pass, but retreat with him was ruin. Desperate as his chances were, he determined, at last, to make a movement or two before surrender, and sustain the high character he had acquired in the campaign of Italy. When he decided on making an effort, the beautiful service of the British guns astounded him; his column, arrested by the cannonade, could not even cross the heights: to move down the road, under the fire of these guns, would be hazardous in the extreme; and in close column too, if round-shot distance was destructive, what might not be dreaded when within range of grape and canister? As

a last effort, he changed his intended attack altogether; withdrew his column, replaced it with a mob of rebel auxiliaries; and directing one of his staff to lead the luckless rabble on, and thus draw upon them the fire of the guns, under cover of the ditches, he made a rapid flank movement, which his extended order of attack, and the advance of the insurgent mob protected from the artillery, which he had already found so formidable.

At this moment a singular panic seized, or appeared to seize, the suspected regiments, who held the left of the position. They opened their fire at a distance when it was totally inefficient; alarm or disaffection could only cause this strange proceeding; Humbert guessed the true cause, and seized upon that only chance of victory.

Pushing on his voltigeurs at double-quick, he gained the broken ground on the left of the Longford regiment, and succeeded in outflanking it. Then the fortune of the day turned, and a scene, never, thank God! witnessed before or since ensued. The Longfords, without discharging a musket, threw down their firelocks, and went over by companies to the French. The Kerry, next on their right, fol-

lowed the example, and a general panic spread through the whole line. Then it was that the wretched imbeciles in command were found wanting: enough of well-affected troops remained to have remedied the disorder, and redeemed the day; but from actual incompetence, the generals could not rally and re-form them. A retreat was hastily commanded; and disgraceful as the order was, it was tenfold aggravated in the execution. The cavalry, who had neither drawn a sword, nor discharged a carbine, instead of retiring leisurely on the town, went off at full trot, disorganizing by their reckless haste a regiment in reserve behind them. The retreat, or, correctly speaking, the rout, became universal; and General — was seen among the foremost files of the flying horsemen.

Meantime my father and the commandant of the artillery could scarcely believe their senses. A few muskets had been discharged, hardly a man was hit, and the army was deserting the field pellmell. Shortall had held the road against every attempt which the French or their allies had made to advance upon it, and

when he noticed the flanking movement, turned his fire upon the left of the enemy ; but, seeing the infantry give way, and deserted by the dragoons altogether, he had no alternative left but to retire the guns, or lose them.

“ Limber-up, lads ! ” he said, “ and be moving ; ” and as the drivers attached the horses, the rebels on the hill, observing the artillery preparing to retreat, poured across the ridge in hundreds. But their tumultuary advance was as promptly interrupted. Shortall unlimbered in a second, and opened with grape upon the rabble ; the shot *laned* the road, and the insurgents, terror-stricken, threw themselves across the ditches, or fled for shelter behind the hill. To the troops, disorganized as they were, a mob-attack might have been ruinous ; but this severe check gave the rear regiment a little time, and enabled it to disengage itself.

“ Pretty affair this, Blake,” said he of the artillery : “ no wonder my heart was heavy this morning ; and yet, God knows ! I little anticipated the fulness of our disgrace. Curse on all fools ! give me the Highlanders and yeomanry, my own guns, a fair field, and no ge-

neral, and I would suffer myself to be blown from a six-pounder, if we did not beat those few French and the horde of banditti that run after them. I hope old Cornwallis, when he does arrive, if that event ever happen, will hang up cowards and rebels indiscriminately. I know at which end he should begin : it is no treason, I hope, to speak of one's superior officer after he has fairly run away."

At this moment an aid-de-camp rode up.

" Pray, Captain Shortall, can you tell me where General —— is, or where I am most likely to fall in with him?"

" As to where he is," replied Shortall dryly, " much, I imagine, depends upon the speed and endurance of his horse. Where he will be found, is a puzzler ; I would recommend you to try Athlone."

" Athlone ! why, it's eighty miles off."

" And yet, notwithstanding the distance," continued the captain, " I shrewdly suspect, judging from the haste with which he started, he will hardly stop short of that city."

" Well," said the aid-de-camp, " it's rather

too far for a morning ride, and I shall content myself with the intelligence of his safety."

"Safe he is," said the commandant of artillery, "from all casualties, save and except those attendant on rough riding and ill-stuffed saddles. But, pray, what is to be done?—and are we to run too?—for the order of the day appears to be 'devil take the hindmost!'"

"It is a deadly shame," observed a yeoman, "to give up the town, when, with a few troops, we could defend it. Could we hold it, Captain Shortall, think you, until the generals will rally some of the runaways?"

"We should in that case, I imagine, hold it to eternity. But we have some honest fellows about us, that appear not to quite relish this new trick of running."

"Let us then," said my father, "make good the bridge, and depend on some chance shaming these refugees to return."

"Be it so," said Shortall, as he halted on the bridge, and unlimbered his cannon, while a few of the Frazer fencibles and Donnegals, with some dozen gentlemen volunteers, who remarked the

beautiful service of the artillery, and stuck to it as a last hope, took post beside the guns.

“Come, Cæsar, this is our position for a while; and if the rascals come on stoutly, we’ll make some of them pay toll before they cross the river.”

Nearly all the troops had cleared the town before this remnant of the royalists occupied the bridge. A few stragglers still came past; but none of them, with one or two exceptions, stopped with the defenders of Castlebar. The last of the refugees ran over, as on the crest of the lofty suburb called Staball, the foremost of the rebels appeared in full pursuit; but one round of grape was sufficient to stop them. Instantly they abandoned the open streets, and endeavoured to penetrate by lanes and by-ways, which would shelter them from the artillery.

“They have not forgotten the lesson we taught them before the rout,” said the commandant of the guns, as he remarked the caution of the rebel advance. “Is the river equally shallow all round the town?”

“It is fordable everywhere,” replied a private yeoman.

“Then our stay here will be but a short one,” was the remark; and the words were indeed soon realized.

A few hussars showed for a moment on the height, and Shortall had just got a gun to bear upon them, when from either side, from yards, houses, and lanes, a close and well-sustained *fusilade* commenced. Two or three matrosses and Frazers dropped, and it was evident that the enemy were in full possession of the suburb. In vain the royalists returned the fire briskly, and the guns, sweeping the heights in front, prevented a Frenchman from advancing; but, under shelter of the houses, the insurgents suffered little loss, while the defenders of the bridge were falling momentarily.

“This will not last,” said Shortall to his companion; “all hope of support is over: what is to be done?”

“Retreat instantly!” exclaimed the major, as he pointed to a body of rebels fording the river below and above the bridge simulta-

neously, while two or three dropping shots were heard directly from the street behind them. "They have got through the gardens, and are already in our rear. Limber-up, or the guns are lost!"

And so it was fated. Orders were promptly issued and obeyed, and the horses were being attached, when a small party of French cavalry approaching by a cross street, galloped suddenly out in front of the cannon.

"Stand fast, lads!" exclaimed my father: "give them a parting round!"

But while he spoke, a body of insurgents, who, under cover of a garden-wall, had crept forward unperceived, threw open a gate beside the bridge, and mixed pellmell with the royalists. A short and bloody contest succeeded; the drivers in the *melée* were knocked from their saddles; and the horses, pricked with pikes and bayonets, became ungovernable, and went off at speed. The guns were lost, but Shortall endeavoured to spike them—the few royalists were forced by numbers over the bridge—and the brave commander hemmed in on every side.

My father, who till now had remained on

foot, sprang on his horse, which he had secured in a gateway out of the line of fire. He saw his brave associate, with a few Frazers and artillerymen, making a fierce resistance, and resolved to try and bring him off. Dashing the spurs in his charger, and overturning one or two of the assailants, he reached him for a second; but he was already down, and received his death-wound under the cannon that he had so nobly defended. Save he could not; but Cæsar Blake avenged him. One ruffian, more remarkable than the rest for his size and ferocity, after giving the fallen officer a mortal stab, shortened his weapon to repeat the thrust. His hat had been struck off in the fray, and he was stooping under my father's sword-arm. With one sweeping cut, the sabre fell upon the ruffian's naked skull, and he fell a dead man on the lifeless body of his victim. Instantly reining round, the major forced his passage through the crowd, and galloped down the street, leaving the hard-contested bridge in possession of the enemy.

The town was filling fast from every side with rebels, and my father's escape was indeed mi-

raculous, as several stragglers fired at him from the houses as he rode off.

And yet this disgraceful day was not without its examples of individual heroism. When Cæsar Blake looked back, the whole suburb was filled with blue uniforms and frieze coats. The street before him was tolerably clear, excepting that part immediately in front of the jail, where a score or two of rebels were endeavouring to break in; and where, to judge from a spattering fire, they had met with some effective opposition. My father, galloping up, alarmed the mob, who retired into an adjoining lane; and he then ascertained that the unequal contest had lain between the rebels and a solitary Frazer fencible. The latter had been sentinel at the prison-gate, and, favoured by the high steps and iron palisades, had defended his post most gallantly, and, as a couple of dead rebels told, not without effect.

“Come away, my brave fellow—resistance is madness—the town is all their own. Jump up behind me!” exclaimed the royalist.

“Na, sir,” coolly returned the Highlander, “I munna lave my post.”

There was no time allowed for further parley. Short as the delay was, it nearly proved fatal to my father, as the rebels, in increased force, rushed from the lane, and again assailed the prison. One drunken scoundrel, seizing the major's bridle, clung to his horse with such desperate tenacity, as nearly to bring him to his knees, and in another moment he would have been surrounded. Fortunately, the rider had reserved a loaded pistol: quickly, but coolly, he pressed the muzzle against the ruffian's head; the discharge blew it almost to atoms; and the horse, liberated from the dead man's grasp, sprang across the body, and bore the royalist away at speed.

My father looked behind him; the mob were now within the palisades: next moment the sentry-box was hurled down the steps, and a score of sanguinary insurgents appeared pushing with pikes and muskets at some prostrate object. Cæsar Blake easily conjectured that the victim of the rabble, was the gallant and devoted Highlander.

CHAPTER X.

A SKIRMISH.—THE RETURN.

Juan, by some strange chance, which oft divides
Warrior from warrior in their grim career,
Like chastest wives from constant husbands' sides,
Just at the close of the first bridal year,
By one of those old turns of Fortune's tides,
Was on a sudden rather puzzled here,
When, after a good deal of heavy firing,
He found himself alone, and friends retiring.

* * * * *

'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come.

Don Juan.

WHEN my father cleared the town, he found himself upon the same road by which the great mass of the fugitive soldiery had retired. Certain indications of a recent defeat were everywhere visible; broken carriages, scattered arms, disabled horses, and de-

served baggage, proclaimed a routed, and not a retreating army. Amid all this abandoned *matériel*, not a wounded man was to be seen. In fact, little loss had been sustained by any but the defenders of the bridge, as scarcely a man had fallen, when a disgraceful flight from an unfought field commenced.

Cæsar Blake felt a momentary indecision whither to direct his course. No military obligation bound him, a free agent, to follow the fortunes of a routed army. Any useless display of loyalty was unnecessary—he had done his duty, and the breath of calumny dared not attach to his name the imputation of disaffection. There were also private, but powerful calls for his exertions. He had a wife to protect, a household to watch over. His mountain-home, now doubly dear, would, were he absent, be exposed to spoliation by countless vagabonds, whom the insurgent success would encourage to break loose upon the world. His resolution was promptly taken, and he determined to return to the highlands, and await coming events there.

Well acquainted with the vicinage, he left

the high road, and striking into a by-path, directed his route towards the mountains. To cross the country, and avoid the open roads, was desirable, both for safety and expedition. The bogs, generally impassable, even to footmen, from the long continuance of dry weather had become firm and safe ; his horse, notwithstanding the morning's fatigue, was still untired ; and conjecturing that the victorious rebels would speedily throw themselves on the line of the royalist retreat, in quest of plunder and prisoners, the horseman pushed briskly on to gain a rising ground, where, removed from all pursuit, he might refresh his horse, and observe what passed for miles around.

No rider but one intimately acquainted with the localities of the country, would venture to cross the morass that lay between the town and the hillock where Cæsar Blake established his temporary bivouac. Though within sight of Castlebar, yet was he in perfect security. A field of corn in stacks covered the crest of the rising ground—here he alighted, and unbridling his horse, supplied him plentifully with provender ; then, having reloaded his pistols, he

stretched himself upon some loose sheaves, and proceeded to refresh himself with a few biscuits, and a well-filled canteen.

The unusual sultriness of the day rendered repose as necessary for the rider as the steed. A breathing space after the excitement and fatigue, mental and bodily, which my father had endured, was now inexpressibly luxurious ; and while thus reclining on the hillock, he was fated to witness the closing scene of the disgraceful affair of Castlebar.

The great road, for many miles, was within his view, and he observed a body of dragoons halted on a height, to watch and report the ulterior movements of the enemy. Presently some straggling rebels issued from the town—larger bodies of these irregulars followed—lastly, a small party of French hussars appeared, who, when they perceived the rival cavalry, rode briskly forward, while the dragoons as slowly retired on their approach.

The unexpected success of the morning had stimulated the national audacity of the French to a pitch of daring that no military *esprit* could warrant. Notwithstanding the great disparity

in force, at sight of the red-jackets, they spurred forward to attack them. The royalists observed their careless advance, their scanty force, and that they were wholly unsupported. Falling back behind the crest of the hill, they formed, and unseen by the hussars, coolly awaited their coming up; while the French, never supposing the royalists were halted, pressed their jaded horses on. Nor were they undeceived until they found themselves on the summit of the height, charged and overthrown by a fresh and superior force. Their resistance was short and gallant; they were sabred, and the victors rode off without losing a man. The bodies of the unlucky chasseurs were interred by the peasantry on the spot; and the height on which they perished, bears the appellation of *French Hill*, in memory of this fatal skirmish.

It appeared strange to my father afterwards, when he remembered with what indifference he viewed the encounter. He looked on with the coldness of an amateur, without being interested as to which should prove the conquerors. In fact, the pusillanimous behaviour of the carbi-

neers had disgusted their late companion-in-arms, and Cæsar Blake hardly cared whether they repelled the attack, or were defeated; while the reckless gallantry of the fallen Frenchmen excited his admiration, and obtained for them a soldier's sympathy. He watched the brief, but bloody contest to its close, and then mounting his horse, directed his course homewards.

He met no interruption; but as he passed through the inhabited country, he was frequently interrogated by the peasantry concerning the result of the engagement, which flying rumours, and a distant cannonade, informed them had been fought. They appeared restless, excited, and irresolute; but this state my father suspected would be of short duration; a general insurrection was inevitable, and he pushed on to reach his home, and prepare for defence or flight, as circumstances might require.

Although impatient to end his journey, the traveller could not effect it before night-fall. Evening found him in the highland valley, and the sun's last light fell upon the eagle's aerie, and sank behind the rocky summit of the

mountain, when the rider bathed the limbs of his weary steed in the cool waters of the dark lake.

His heart throbbed with delight as he entered the pass, from which his beloved home would soon be visible. His route through the mountains had been most solitary, and for hours he saw no human face. The moon had not yet risen above the heights which overhung the rocky opening in the hill, and in the gloom he perceived two men directly in the road before him.

“Who goes there?” exclaimed the horseman.

“Holy Saint Patrick! it’s himself,” responded a well-known voice; and next moment, Denis O’Brien and an armed attendant rushed forward, seized his hand with that familiarity which, after perilous events, is held permissible, and both poured forth a thundering jubilation.

“And is it yourself, after all? and are ye safe and sound?” exclaimed the delighted valet. “Oh, murder! if I knew what to do, since I heard the first whisper of the battle—

partly because I hadn't the luck of bein' there, and partly on account of her ladyship. Och ! but the joy will kill her ! Here have I mounted guard, for fear some runagade would slip past, and scar her honor's life out. Arrah, what news, *avourneein* ? Is yourself safe, and which side won ?”

“ Safe I am,” replied the horseman, “ except a trifling bone-bruising ; and we have been as well beaten as ever a pack of cowardly scoundrels deserved. But how is your lady ?”

“ Frightened to death, the crature !” replied Mr. O'Brien. “ She says she saw something alarming in my face—though, God knows ! whiniver I came in her sight, I strove to laugh, when my heart was brakin' ; and ye would hear me a mile off, whistling like a blackbird, while the tune stuck like a bone in my throat, and nearly choked me. Och ! what a comfort it was to get away, and curse until I felt myself in christian timper. And have the troops retrated, major ? Maybe they'll have another shy to-morrow, and yer honor might spare me for a day or two ?”

“ I'll not belie them, friend Denis,” replied

the horseman, "by saying they retreated. They ran for it like men; and if the French can catch the slowest, then are they the smartest fellows that ever bore a firelock."

"*Run!*" exclaimed the astonished valet; "may the foul fiend lame them for life, the thieves of the world! But, sir, you must not go in, until I make her honor sensible that you are on the march. She's so nervous, the joy would be her death!" and off went Denis O'Brien, the harbinger of welcome news.

Poor Ellen had been a silent but a sincere mourner. It was impossible that she should not perceive that some unfortunate occurrence either impended or had occurred. Denis was a poor actor; his outward manifestations of gaiety were forced and unnatural, and ludicrously contrasted with anxieties that, in spite of all his efforts, were too evident to escape remark. The sudden departure and prolonged absence of her husband; the untimely arrival of the disabled man; the servants going about constantly armed; and the quiet but constant look-out upon the road, changed apprehension

to certainty, and heralded to her uneasy mind the coming of disaster. Nor were her fears lessened, on overhearing Denis, who had dressed Conolly's wound, remark that "it was much liker a bullet, than a button, hole!"

My father having confided his tired horse to the servant, quietly approached his beautiful and beloved retreat. He ensconced himself within a clump of evergreens, from whence he could see the windows of the favourite sitting-room. It was a lovely and a peaceful scene. The moonbeams were dancing merrily on the little lake, while, in varied shadowing, her fitful light appeared and disappeared over the mountain ridges. But the returning soldier had no eyes for gazing on what would form a painter's study. One object engrossed his sight and filled his heart, and that was his own gentle Ellen, who was standing in melancholy musing at the open casement. At this moment, Denis O'Brien was seen advancing.

"Well, Denis," said a sweet and melancholy voice, that thrilled through the listener's heart, "have you brought any tidings?"

“Arrah, the divil a news that’s bad, any how, my lady. The master will be here to-morrow *for sartein*,” replied the valet.

“Pshaw!—you told me he would be here this evening. I fear you are but amusing me, and have heard no intelligence.”

“By this book!” and Mr. O’Brien tapped the barrel of the gun he carried on the hollow of his arm, “I was talking to a man that parted from his honour within this half hour. That is—I mane—Arrah! my lady, don’t take a body up so quick. Says the chap to me, ‘Denis, you know you may put depindince in what I tell ye; the master’s coming home, as fast as Splinterbar can carry him: and more betoken,’ says he, ‘in the battle he didn’t get a scratch.’”

“The battle! what battle?”

“Arrah!—sorra battle, good or bad; but the French, you know —”

“What! French?”

“Death an nouns! don’t be flustering yer-self, my lady. Arrah! what put the French in my head? It’s them rebels, the curse of Cromwell on them!”

“Rebels—French—the battle !”

My father had received sufficient evidence touching Denis’s abilities as an ambassador, to induce him to supersede the valet as soon as possible. Stealing round the shrubbery, he entered the house without observation, and on tiptoe approached my mother at the window.

“Denis,” she said, “you have made me very wretched. There is some mystery—some concealment. Is he well ? is he coming ? When ? where ? Oh ! speak man ! anything will be preferable to this uncertainty.”

A gentle step was heard stealing across the carpet,—a soft voice whispered something in her ear—she turned quickly, uttered a shriek of delight, and sprang into the extended arms of the traveller. “Cæsar ! my own, my darling husband ! and are you come safely back ?”

“Why, upon my sowl ! he is ; and so I would have made ye sînsible, if your ladyship had but patience. And now, the sooner the master gets his supper the better ; for nothing, my lady, gives a man his appetite, like a long ride or a good bating.”

A month passed, and the rebellion was sup-

pressed. Humbert held possession of Castlebar, until a combined movement of twenty thousand men, under the Marquis Cornwallis, obliged him to evacuate the town. After some able movements, and a great deal of severe marching, a spirited affair with the Limerick regiment at Colooney, brought the campaign to a close. The French surrendered prisoners of war; and the miserable wretches who accompanied them, were hanged or shot, according to the fancy of the general, or as either was most convenient.

In their beautiful retreat my parents remained undisturbed. Conolly recovered, and embarking in a smuggler, escaped to Holland, and thus avoided the fate that other leaders of the insurgents underwent.

If my father had any wish to follow the fortunes of the royalists during the short and sanguinary campaign that succeeded the rout of Castlebar, the interesting situation of his lady made his sojourn in the mountain-lodge indispensable, for an heir was promised. Without his wife's knowledge, he apprised her father of the circumstance, and made a strong appeal to him for forgiveness. It was unsuccessful; a

cold and heartless answer was returned, that held out no hope of pardon, or betrayed any symptom of returning regard. He spoke of her as of one dead; and alluding to her elopement, bitterly upbraided my father with her loss—

“ You stole her from me; like a thief you stole her
At dead of night !”

Of course, the major concealed this unfortunate correspondence from his lady, but he redoubled his attentions, and Ellen was truly happy. Removed from the world, neither of my parents appeared to have a wish ungratified; and never were two hearts more tenderly united than those of the ex-major and the fair runaway.

CHAPTER XI.

A STORM—AN ESCAPE—CONFESSIONS OF A FUGITIVE.

Away ! away ! and on we dash !
Torrents less rapid and less rash.

Mazeppa.

What dost thou require ?
Rest, and a guide, and food, and fire !

SCOTT.

Short was the course his restlessness had run,
But long enough to leave him quite undone.

Lara.

It was on the third evening after the French had surrendered at Ballinamuck, that an incident occurred which, from the confusion of the times, created no small alarm in the isolated household of Cæsar Blake.

The day was unusually sultry ; any exertion out of doors was disagreeable and oppressive ; the air felt like breathings from a furnace ; dark clouds, surcharged with rain, canopied every

hill-top; while distant mutterings from the ocean told that a tempest was on the wing. Presently, with one wild crash, the storm burst above the lodge, and a volume of water deluged the parched earth. Next minute, every rill and water-course was filled; and, tumbling from the heights, a hundred streams hid themselves in the dark bosom of Glencullen.

How grand an Alpine storm appears, when witnessed from a safe and sheltered spot! The roar of waters; the pealing of Heaven's artillery; flash succeeding flash, gleaming over highland steep, or brightening the swollen surface of the river—till, spent by its own fury, the blaze is seen no more, and the thunder dies upon the ear in low and distant mutterings.

Thus passed the storm, leaving a cloudless sky behind; and a cooler and lovelier evening never gladdened a mountain solitude.

My mother was delighted, when her liege lord invited her to accompany him on an excursion up the lake; she to sketch mountain-scenery, while he amused himself with angling. The air was balmy and delicious, Nature felt refreshed, the trouts sprang merrily, the coots

sported gaily in the reeds, while the wild-duck piloted her infant-brood to their island retreat, when plashing oars apprised her of man's approach. The sun was nearly setting, and produced among the broken hill-tops a splendid alternation of lights and shadows.

Just then, while my mother directed her husband's eyes to the picturesque appearance of a fissure in a range of heights, whose bases touched the margin of the water, a human figure rushed through the pass at headlong speed, and hurried down the steep declivity. The cause was not long concealed ; several soldiers crossed the hill, and discharged their muskets at the fugitive, who, apparently uninjured by the fire, outstripped his followers easily, and held on a course directly for the narrow union of the lakes, where my father's boat was laid upon her oars.

This unexpected chase produced an unexpected sensation ; pencil and fishing-rod were abandoned ; my father watched the pursuit with excited interest, and my mother with nervous apprehension.

On came the fugitive ! He paused for a moment on a rising ground beside the lake,

looked back at his pursuers, first levelled the gun he carried at the foremost, but changing his determination, he aimed at the second steadily ; he fell—while, flinging his musket away, the runaway bounded across the hillock, leaped into the lake, buffeted the water gallantly, and pressed for the other shore.

My father's boat lay directly in his course, but owing to the shelter of a reedy islet, this circumstance escaped the notice of the fugitive. Too late he perceived it, and for a second paused from exertion ; then, with a sudden resolution, stretched boldly out again. When he came within an oar's length, he laid his hand upon the blade, which a rower dropped on the surface to support him, and in a voice that told how violent his efforts at escape had been, he said,

“ You will not stop an unfortunate man, major ? ”

“ Who are you ? ” asked my father.

“ A rebel ! ” was the bold reply.

“ You know me, it would seem. ”

“ Ay, that I do ; will you stop me ? ”

“ I am no bloodhound, ” said Cæsar Blake ;

“push on, the Highlanders are on the beach. Keep the boat between you and them, for they are within good musket-range, and have re-loaded.”

“Cæsar Blake, I owe you a life ; I may pay ye someway yet—God Almighty bless you, lady”—for my mother had earnestly joined the fugitive in his petition,—“I can only pray for you. Will you, major, give me a moment’s breathing-time, before you ferry yon blood-hounds over?”

“I ferry them over ! No—no.—It would be a poor exploit to crush a hunted enemy. Had I met you at Castlebar—”

“And so you did,” returned the fugitive. “Ay, and the gun that did its business to the last, missed fire upon the bridge.”

My mother shuddered. “Off !” cried the major, “and if all other places fail, at twilight you may find a crust at the lodge. But, hark ! they halloo from the shore ; and now, God speed thee, friend !”

“Amen !” responded the runaway, as he dropped the oar, and with renewed vigour

breasted the waters gallantly—he gained in a minute the opposite shore, and plunging into the reeds, disappeared in the broken ground that skirted that part of Glencullen.

Perceiving that the rebel had landed, my father directed his boatmen to pull in. The Highlanders, three in number, had remarked the escape of the fugitive, and, irritated at the fall of their companion, whose leg had been broken by the outlaw's shot, hallooed more furiously, while more than once they threatened to fire on the boat.

“Why the de'il did ye na pull in, nor stop the villain in the water?” was the rough address of the corporal, as my father stepped ashore.

The major drew himself up and haughtily replied, “Because I do not attend to the orders of such fellows.”

“Fellows!” screamed the Highlander;
“Ken ye, friend, who we be?”

“I may guess possibly. Pray *who* are you?”

“Wha am I?” returned the corporal, swelling with rage; “are ye blind? Know ye the

colour of this coat, and ask sic silly questions. De'il ha' me, gin I would mind much sticcin the bagnet in ye !”

“ If you did,” said the master of the boatmen, “ you would never draw another, Sawney.” My mother grew pale as she watched the flashing eyes of the affronted Celt ; “ Fear nothing, Ellen, the fellows do not know me. Scoundrel ! I am your superior officer, and your insolence would fully warrant my leaving you to your fate. Look up ! see you any thing behind that distant hillock ?”

The soldier turned round—his companions also looked attentively. The colour left their cheeks, their hands trembled ; for at least three-score armed peasants were regularly extending themselves between the Highlanders and the hills, making retreat impossible, while to resist was madness.

“ Scoundrel !” said my father, “ because I would not strike down a drowning wretch, you would have fired at an innocent female, and assassinated the king's officer. What do you suppose your life is worth ?”

“Little, I suspect,” replied the Highlander doggedly; “but at all events, I wun’na part with it chape. Look to your primings, lads; at least, we’ll die like sodgers!”

“Gallantly spoken!” exclaimed Cæsar Blake; “that speech redeems your rashness. Die you shall not, nor shall insult or injury befall a comrade in these hills. Stand fast—order arms!”

The tone of voice in a moment told that the person who gave it was no pretender.

“We are at your command,” said the Celt; “Lord sees, we could na guess that we should find an officer in these bleak mountains.”

“’Twas well you did, or you were but lost men. Fear nothing. Stay, Ellen, here,—I leave you only for a few minutes.”

“No, no, dear Cæsar! You must not venture among these wild men.”

My father smiled. “I am safe, my pretty one, not a hand there will injure me;” and leaving the shore, he advanced to meet the armed body, who were surrounding the devoted Highlanders, with a caution and regularity

that betokened their determination to prevent all chances of escape.

When the major was seen approaching, the leader of the party came forward.

“Prendergast! is it possible? You, who were hitherto so remarkable for good conduct in very turbulent times, are you going to turn rebel now, and attack the king’s troops?”

“No, major,” said the peasant, “you will allow that I have been a quiet and a peaceable man. But that poor fellow whom you saw driven to the lake, came a stranger, under trust, to my house for shelter. There’s money on his head, I fancy, but I would rather die than see him taken off and hanged.”

“He is safe for the present,” replied my father. “Had I wished him harm, a blow from the oar would have saved all farther trouble. I saved *him*, and I wish to save *you*. If you molest those soldiers, have you calculated what the consequences will be? Your houses will be burned, your property pillaged, yourselves hunted, hanged, or driven out upon the world, and your families beggared and undone.”

“His honor’s right,” exclaimed several voices.

“ Well, major, and what would you have us do ?”

“ Why, nothing, my good friends, but to just go quietly home ; and the sooner pike and musket are again put in their hiding-places, the better. Where are the rest of the Highlanders ?”

“ Searching the next village for a priest from Costello, who was out, God pity him !” returned the leader.

“ *I* don’t pity him,” rejoined my father ; “ had he attended to his duties, and discouraged rebellion among his flock, instead of exciting them to insurrection by his own pernicious example, many a wretch would escape the gallows who may well curse him. Go, tell the soldiers that their companions are safe, and that the wounded man shall be attended to ; get a door,* and carry him with care to the lodge.”

* As the doors in an Irish cottage are suspended upon hooks, they are easily removable, and contrived to discharge more than a “ double debt.” Laid across a tub, the door becomes *locum tenens* for the table—or laid upon the floor, wonderfully assists the saltations of a jig-dancer.

Many a cabin perforated with two orifices, only possesses a single door. Of course, it is applied to stop the *weather* opening in the wall, while the *lee* one must be contented

“Shah, shah—yes, yes,” returned a dozen voices, now as solicitous to perform any act of kindness to the soldiers, as five minutes ago they were burning to assail them. Such is the versatile disposition of a people, whose passions have made them playthings for knaves and scoundrels to employ, and whose alternations from right to wrong are variable as the sunshine of “an April morn !”

Half a dozen sturdy peasants had immediately set off to assist the maimed Highlander, while the others, in obedience to my father’s advice, prepared to return to their village. They were moving, when a whispering took place, and the peasant who seemed to influence their actions, addressed the major, who was retiring to his boat.

with an old mat, a bunch of heather, a tattered creel, or any of “the thousand and one” shifts, which Irish ingenuity could alone devise. In case of accidents, the door becomes a litter for the sufferer, or a bier for the defunct. Hence, gentlemen who shuffle off this mortal coil in a steeple chase, or on the field of honour, are thus transported to a convenient place to “lie in state.” From this it has become common to prophesy of a drunkard, a duellist, or a break-neck rider, that “on some blessed morning, he’ll come home upon a *door* !”

“The boys hope, major dear, that you won’t mention anything of this to the ‘Right Honourable.’”

My father smiled. “Fear nothing from me, lads. Denis and I have different fancies as to finishing people; he likes the rope, I prefer the musket. He is pretty well supplied with turn-coats and informers, without requiring my services; and, to say the truth, even were there a vacancy on his staff, I apprehend that I have neither favour in his sight, nor abilities in his favourite line of business, to obtain the appointment. And now, if you have no ambition to ‘spoil a market,’* the sooner you are off the better.”

With unfeigned pleasure, the expectant group upon the shore observed the peasantry retire, and my father return—all were speedily

* Not an hundred years have passed, since an Irish judge always made it a point to hang his men upon the market-day. The advantages were manifold. The execution was witnessed by thousands, who otherwise would have found some inconvenience in attending. The more hanging matches, the less the thing was regarded. People became reconciled to the rope, and when in good time their own turn came, they proved the benefit of example,—“died game, and lived in story.”

embarked, and the boat pulled rapidly to the lodge. The soldiers felt as men do, when suddenly delivered from impending death, while my mother's blanched cheeks showed that she had not nerve to witness scenes where men's lives hung upon hair-breadth accidents—nor had her ears become sufficiently “Irish,” to listen unmoved to the whistle of a musket-ball.

During the short passage down the lake, the Highland corporal explained the cause of this unexpected, and nearly disastrous, expedition. A military detachment had been sent from Castlebar to occupy the village of Louisburgh, as it was contiguous to the mountains, where it was well known many of the rebels had concealed themselves. Two or three of the chief delinquents were especially pointed out, and a reward offered for their apprehension. In this list, *the fugitive* was conspicuous. As it turned out, he was not only in the neighbourhood, but appeared determined that on this point there should be no doubt whatever; for while the military were in active pursuit of him among the hills, he entered the village in their absence, tore down the paper that proclaimed

him, and affixing it to the mill-door, amused himself and sundry spectators, by *riddling* it with bullets. This audacious insult was too much for Highland blood to tolerate. Private information denounced the place he harboured ; the village was surrounded, and favoured by accidental circumstances, the daring outlaw was nearly surprised asleep. He had only time to partially dress, seize his gun, and jump from a window. The military were all around ; and though fired at within pistol-range, to the surprise of all, he managed to escape.

It was not long before the rest of the Highlanders, guided by a peasant, joined their comrades ; the disabled soldier was carefully carried in, and from the attention and hospitality bestowed upon the wounded and the weary, the party left the lodge next morning with very different sentiments towards Cæsar Blake than the stormy meeting on the shores of the lake foreboded.

It was nearly midnight ; the house was quiet ; for the tired soldiery, after ample refreshment and a free carouse, were buried in profound repose. My father had taken his rounds for

the last time, to ascertain that all was secure, and was entering the hall, when from a clump of low shrubs, scarcely high enough to conceal a dog, a human voice pronounced his name in tones so low as to be almost inaudible. The major started, "Is there any body there?" he exclaimed, "Speak!"

"It is I," replied the same low voice, "I, the runaway!"

"Hush!" said my father, "there are enemies in the house."

"I know it," replied the voice from the shrubbery; "but I watched them to their quarters, and heard their heavy breathing outside the door. They are asleep."

"Are you long here?"

"I am; I would have tapped upon the window, but feared, from the lateness of the hour, that the lady might be alarmed."

"You did well; remain there for a minute—I shall not be long absent."

Cæsar Blake briefly apprised his wife of the unexpected visit, and having closed the curtains of the drawing-room, and ascertained that no person was in the way to observe the

stranger's entrance, he brought in the weary fugitive.

Had not my mother been prepared for this midnight interview, the appearance of the late guest might have startled one of stronger nerves. Surprised, and driven from his hiding-place, half-dressed, his shirt was torn in a struggle—for a Highlander had actually seized him, and a slight flesh-wound had discoloured it with blood. After the violent exertions of escaping, the wet clothes and chilling dew had benumbed his stiffened limbs; his teeth chattered; his hands shook; and his whole look bespoke cold, want, and weariness.

Yet the outlaw's spirit was unsubdued. He stood at the extremity of the apartment, and when my father filled a glass with brandy, and beckoned him to approach the table, he muttered something about "wet clothes" and "the lady's presence," as if, notwithstanding the extent of his suffering, his pride refused to permit a female eye to dwell upon his wretchedness.

"Come, my poor fellow; drink—that brandy will be serviceable; you must be chilled almost to death."

The outlaw took the glass, and respectfully drank to his host and the lady.

“Ay, major, that is indeed a cordial,” said the fugitive; “my heart warms anew, and the blood flows again through my veins!”

“I thought so,” said the major; “and now I will entrust you to one who will supply your supper, and furnish you with a bed. In the morning we will talk further.”

“Before morning,” he replied, “I shall be many a mile from this.”

“Is it so? Come, then, as time presses, what are your wants? speak boldly.”

“Food,” returned the outlaw, “clothing, and a short rest.”

“All these shall be yours—” and my father rang the bell. Denis O’Brien answered it, and to him the fugitive was entrusted, with all necessary directions for attending to his safety and his wants.

This incident changed the major’s purpose of retiring to bed. He wished to speak to the fugitive again, for the allusion to the affair of Castlebar had awakened his curiosity. A different feeling actuated my mother. In the

stranger's looks there was something to interest, and much to alarm. She was anxious to see one whom she half feared and compassionated ; and it is inconceivable how frequently in life these conflicting sentiments are found.

The delay was short. An hour had scarcely elapsed, when the stranger again presented himself. Denis had made a striking change in the outward man, by equipping him in a sporting dress of his master, and he looked a different being.

The wanderer had scarcely reached manhood. Buoyant and vigorous as his youthful figure seemed, he was far from having achieved the gigantic strength, which his powerful frame promised to possess when it had matured. His face was handsome ; the eye was dark, the teeth regular, and the mouth well-formed—and yet the expression was on the whole unfavourable. Every line of that handsome countenance betrayed the workings of stormy and ungovernable passions, easy to excite, and difficult to allay. Whether it was that a bolder spirit had revived with returning vigour, or that he felt himself no longer the abject fugitive, as when he crawled

from his concealment, subdued by fatigue and paralyzed by cold, he advanced boldly to his benefactors; and when he acknowledged the kindly reception he had gotten in his hour of need, the language in which he expressed his gratitude, was very different from what an ordinary peasant would employ.

“Have you been sufficiently refreshed and rested?” said the major.

“I have, indeed,” returned the fugitive, “been freely welcomed, and generously supplied with all I wished or wanted. I have nothing to ask, but that you will receive an out-cast’s blessing, and believe that James Murphy will never forget this night to you and your’s. Lady, we may not meet again,”—for my mother had risen to leave the room,—“may you never require the only service that I could offer; but, ’tis a strange world, and should you, may I be near to render it.”

“And where do you purpose going?” said the major, as the door closed.

“To Connemara,” replied the fugitive, “and join some fellows as wild and wretched as myself.”

“Nay,” said the major, “why persevere in crime, and why add fuel to the fire? The severity of Government will in time relax: remain quiet, and you may yet be happy; you are young.”

“Young I am,” replied the fugitive; “I have not reckoned twenty summers, and yet am I a wanderer, a cast-away, beyond recovery or redemption!”

“Pshaw, nonsense! The beard is not curled on your chin; what can you have done to render your honest chances in life so desperate? Attend to me: live quietly, Murphy; remain for a while in retirement. I am not, God knows! over wealthy—but still I can spare you enough to prevent any necessity on your part for taking to desperate means; and when a few months blow over, I will intercede and gain your pardon.”

“Cæsar Blake,” said the outlaw, “we are alone. I owed you a life; I owe you for this welcome succour, without which the life you spared would have been an useless gift. But your intended kindness would be idle. Did I

escape the Mall* in Castlebar, what would save me from the gallows in Clonmel?"

"I hardly understand you," said my father.

"Listen, then;" and the fugitive approached my father closely: "mine is as wild a tale as any you may have yet heard. My father was but a peasant"—He paused. "Hang it! one will feel those weaknesses! May I, under favour, trespass on your hospitality?" The major bowed; and the outlaw filled a goblet of port-wine, drank it, and continued. "My father was a peasant, but he was a wealthy one. I was his only child; his ambition was to make me a priest, and he gave me a suitable education. I learned Latin freely: I loved books—read ardently, and soon discovered that I was not formed for a churchman. The calmness of the cloister was unsuited to a spirit wild as mine—I felt small ambition to fill a confessional, and listen to man's deceit and woman's frailty. Well, they found out that the church would not in me receive an ornament; and they devoted me to physic, and bound me

* This was a favourite hanging-place during, and after, the rebellion.

to an apothecary in Longford. Alas ! I had no fancy for dispensing drugs ; physic was as little to my taste as divinity ; I tired of anything like thralldom, and only waited for a decent apology to kick the shackles off. For that I did not tarry long, as my master saved me all trouble by discarding me. The truth must out : his daughter was seventeen and his wife seven-and-thirty ; both favoured me with their friendship, and I preferred the young one's. We were indiscreet ; mamma was on the watch ; our affair was discovered, denounced, and, what I sighed for most, the honest apothecary gave me—the door and my indentures.

“ After this exploit, it was useless to return home. The second professional failure irritated my poor father ; he affected to be displeased, and I determined to be independent. I was just eighteen the morning I wandered off, neither knowing nor caring which way I headed.

“ In the course of a week's rambling, I found myself near a relative of my mother's, who was gamekeeper to Lord ——, and I thought I might as well visit him. I did so, and was hospitably received. He was getting old, had

an infirm ankle, and, having discovered that I was a better shot than himself, persuaded me to become, for the present, his assistant, with a promise that in time I should succeed him. It was a life that suited me well ; I followed my own fancy—killed game, broke dogs, made love, sang, danced, hurled, and was happy.

“ This was but a fleeting hour ; a gleam of sunshine before a thunder-storm.” The outlaw stopped : he was for a moment agitated ; but the feeling that caused it was quickly subdued, and he thus continued : — “ My relative had an only daughter ; she was about my own age, and, handsome as many of the southern peasants are, I never saw one who could compare with Rose Dwyer. Residing beneath the same roof, and constantly together, is it surprising that we loved ? Mine was a passion that death alone could end—hers was, unfortunately, a transitory fancy.

“ Christmas came : the castle was filled with company ; the heir had completed his minority, and fêtes and rejoicings celebrated that great event. He returned from Oxford, and it was a fatal return for both him and me. He was a

fine-looking young man, warm-hearted, affable, a sportsman, and I liked him. From the cradle he had been a spoiled child; from a boy his own master: he had been fashionably educated, and, of course, was fashionably profligate. From the moment he saw Rose Dwyer he became fascinated with her beauty. I was not blind; but had I not observed it, his passion would have been no secret; for in the familiarity of shooting condescension, he more than hinted that the woman I designed to be a wife, he intended to make a mistress.

“It is useless to be particular. He found agents enough to assist in corrupting innocence; and every vulnerable point in Rose’s character was vigorously assailed, and all means used to undermine her virtue. Presents and flattery were lavishly employed; yet, had I remained, I believe Rose would have resisted all solicitation; and, instead of becoming the plaything of a vicious peer, lived in honourable honesty the wife of the peasant’s son.

“The secret was not long undiscovered as to how far my presence had rendered Lord William’s plans abortive, and caused his over-

tures to be rejected. To win Rose, I must be removed. The young lord cared for me; but I was an obstacle to the attainment of a fancy—a thorn in his path of pleasure, and I must in some way be got rid of.

“ This was rather difficult; I was a favourite with the old earl; I had committed no fault; and to part with me, without a reason, was impossible. But removed I must be, and that by under-hand contrivances.

“ Where the will exists, opportunity is seldom wanting long. It happened that I was sent by the keeper to the next town, to sell some deer and rabbit skins. A false villain, a creature of Lord William, and one who cordially hated me for the favour I held in the sight of the old earl, accompanied me. We disposed of the skins, and went to a public-house to refresh ourselves—I was an unsuspecting fool, and he an artful scoundrel. He managed to intoxicate me; bribed a crimp, brought him in, slipped a shilling into my pocket, swore I had been regularly enlisted, and, before I was sufficiently sobered to comprehend their villany, I was marched off with some other wretches under a

military guard, conveyed to Cork, and shipped directly off to Bristol.

“ I detain you, major ; but I will hurry to the close. With my feelings I will not trouble you. Imagine a caged tiger, who pants to spring upon his keeper, but finds the bars prevent it. I knew at once the villany practised upon me ; I guessed the ruin preparing for another. The scheme was clear ; and I swore, if I could not mar, I would revenge it deeply.

“ My resolution, of course, was to desert from the regiment, and return to Ireland.

“ Passion overcame prudence. I made the attempt too rashly ; was betrayed, overpowered, retaken, and brought back a prisoner, after having wounded four soldiers engaged in securing me.

“ Well, the result was—” The fugitive paused, grew pale as death, his eyes glared, his brows united. “ Come, this is weakness,” he gasped out. “ You, a soldier, will guess the consequence—*the halberts !* Major—ay, to the halberts was I doomed ! I was tied up before a thousand lookers-on, and received five hundred

lashes, honestly counted and vigorously inflicted. They excoriated my back, but they could not break my spirit. I placed a musket-bullet between my teeth, and never gratified my tormentors with a groan !

“ Did a failure make me renounce my resolution ? Oh no ! Had they cut a limb off, I would have dragged the mutilated carcass to the place where I had been injured and disgraced, and I would have had revenge.

“ Accident, happily, assisted me to effect my escape from Bristol. The first morning I crawled from the hospital, I met an Irish sailor in the street. I heard him speak in my native language ; I followed him, told him how I had been kidnapped, and implored him to assist me in returning. He did so ; privately supplied me with jacket and trowsers, smuggled me on board, concealed me in the hold, and divided his grub and grog as liberally as if I had been a brother : and while my tender-hearted judges believed me, for weeks to come, the tenant of an hospital, I was hurrying back—too late to save Rose Dwyer from disgrace, but not too late to exact a desperate revenge.

“ I did not delay an hour in Waterford, but started for Oak Wood, the earl’s residence. I reached the termination of my journey after dark, and sought the dwelling of a park-keeper, who owed me some obligations, and mortally hated Halligan, the scoundrel who had betrayed me to the crimp. I was kindly welcomed; my back dressed, and I was accommodated with everything I needed. To my repeated enquiries I received reluctant answers. My worst fears were confirmed—Rose Dwyer had fallen !

“ Wearied as I was, I tossed upon a restless bed—hell burned in my breast—my brain was fired—my blood felt like molten lead—and blood alone could calm the demon spirit that filled my tortured bosom.

“ The next day passed, although I thought it endless. I had learned all the particulars of the seduction of the woman I once idolized. Worthless as she was, I did not curse her; and I thought of her fall, more in sorrow, than in anger.

“ She was now residing in a beautiful cottage in a remote part of the domain, Halligan and

his wife her sole companions. The old lord was willingly blind to the affair, which the younger one took no pains in concealing. He spared no expense in decking out his victim, drove her openly about, and she appeared, as they told me, insensible to her disgrace, and displayed in public her ill-acquired finery—the wages of guilt and shame.

“Night came at last — never did expecting lover sigh for it more ardently than I. None knew every coppice and skirting in the park better, and, by a devious path through clumps and underwood, I reached unseen the cottage of my worthless love.

“It was well lighted, but the closed curtains prevented me from observing those within. I waited two long, long hours. There was occasionally noise, and mirth, and bustle. I heard Rose laugh joyously. Poor wretch ! little did she foresee how soon that light laugh would turn to tears and wailing.

“I stood in a belt of evergreens that shut out the cottage from the view of the road, and the door was within a few paces. Presently I heard a horse-tramp in the rear ; and Halligan

came round with a lantern in his hand, leading Lord William's favourite pony. My hand crept to my bosom, where my pistols were concealed, when I saw the villanous agent of all my misery. But the door opened, and Rose, splendidly dressed, stood beside her seducer. She held a lighted candle, and when I think how like an angel she looked, my brain yet burns. 'Farewell,' she said, 'farewell, my William.' *My William!* By Heaven! major, that phrase agonized my soul more than five hundred stripes had tortured my body. 'And shall I ride the sorrel mare to-morrow?' He whispered something in her ear; she blushed, smiled, turned her rosy lips to his, and kissed him ardently. I could see no more. The foul fiend's breast never felt more hellishly than mine. I levelled a pistol, drew the trigger, and next moment Lord William was in eternity—and on the bosom of the woman he had ruined, the last sigh of the seducer escaped.

"I did not conceal myself; I strode from my ambush; I stood over my fallen rival, while Rose, uttering piercing shrieks, dropped in convulsions on the lifeless body of her noble

paramour. I was cool, unmoved; ay, more collected than while I now relate the tale. Halligan had fled. I seized the bridle of Lord William's pony, mounted, rode off to the mountains, and long before morning was safe from pursuit.

“My story is nearly ended. The young lord's murder was generally imputed to political causes, and a thousand pounds were offered for the apprehension of the assassin. I eluded all attempts to take me, headed a body of insurgents, and, finally, joined the French.”

“What became of the wretched cause of all this blood and misery?” said the host.

“Poor girl! I cannot but pity her still. The old earl was distracted, and attributed the loss of his son to the fatal connexion he had formed. Rose was disgracefully turned out of her gay residence. The villain Halligan plundered her of all her ill-acquired valuables, for she had none to befriend or shelter her. She was loathed, execrated, persecuted—and driven desperate, she died by her own hand; her uncoffined remains were cast into a hole in the

high-road ; and a common grave refused to the remains of her, who had once been so lovely—and once so ardently beloved !

“I have done, major ; the rest is of no moment. You have heard, what no human ear shall ever hear, ‘*the fugitive’s Confession.*’ You have repaid evil with good. I assailed you on the bridge of Castlebar ; and twice, the gun that never failed before, was snapped at you ineffectually, within a dozen paces. Farewell, major ; the prayer of such a wretch as I would not be heard ; but may you be happy ! and when you hear Murphy ‘the murderer’ cursed—remember the wrongs that roused him—the deliberate villany that drew down his just vengeance !”

He caught my father’s hand, wrung it with a wild grasp, rushed from the room, and was hidden in the plantations.

While the major was still pondering over the tale of blood, Denis O’Brien cautiously peeped into the apartment.

“Arrah ! and are ye alone ? Is he gone, the devil ?”

“Devil, you may well term him ; and yet that wretch, but for the crimes of others, might

not have been more criminal than his fellow men. I hope you took care of him, Denis?"

"Faith! and that I did," replied the valet; "mate and drink he had *galore*, and for-by a good suit of clothes, I gave him the owld carbine, just to keep in his hand by the way of company, until he can stale a better gun."

"There you did wrong," said the master; "we are bound to give food and shelter to the wretched—but to arm the king's enemy! it was wrong, Denis."

"Why then, and may be it was," said Mr. O'Brien, "and I niver thought of that, good or bad. But when the cratur told me he was goin' into Connemara, to join the biggest thieves under the canopy,* why, it would be worse than murder to let him among them without something in his fist. They say, that a cat in hell without claws has no chance at all, at all; and sure Connemara's worse, and that everybody allows."

Denis' logic was unanswerable, and my father said no more, but retired to his chamber.

* A Connaught abbreviation for "under the canopy of heaven."

CHAPTER XII.

PROMOTION.—A CHRISTENING.

What have we
Done, that we must be victims for a deed
Before our birth?

Cain.

Al Hassan's brow
Is brightened with unusual joy—
What mighty mischief glads him now,
Who never smiles but to destroy?

MOORE.

AUTUMN passed, the trees were in the sear and yellow leaf, and frequent gales from the stormy west swept their falling honours along the valley, as if to intimate that the dreary season of the "dying year" was come. Other indications of icy winter were frequent. The woodcock sprang from the evergreens, the snow-birds flocked upon the sand-hills, snipes and field-fares arrived in numbers, and wild geese and barnacles were nightly heard in their

passage to the feeding-grounds, as they directed their clamorous flight from the lake to the fens.

The time, indeed, had come when the lodge must be exchanged for the town, and that, too, for other causes than inclemency of weather. The country was disturbed by marauders; and the mountain-districts infested by proclaimed rebels, or deserters from the king's troops; who, rendered desperate when the French surrendered, scattered over the province, to skreen themselves from the merited vengeance which their treachery and disaffection had incurred. Connemara, wild, lawless, and almost without the pale of civilization, was a safe and favourite haunt for all malefactors; and its proximity to the lodge, greatly increased the insecurity of the latter. My mother's approaching accouchement made a town residence indispensable. A house was accordingly engaged in Castlebar—and leaving Denis O'Brien in charge of the garrison, Cæsar Blake and his lady bade, as they believed, a temporary farewell to their mountain-home. But it proved to be an eternal one!

It was on a fine November day that they

left the highlands. The sun was sparkling on the summits of the hills, which a recent snow-shower had slightly sprinkled. The stream from the lake had changed its character, and, swollen by autumnal floods, appeared now a goodly river. Though the heath was darkened, and the trees leafless, there was still a quiet and romantic beauty in this lonely landscape, which winter could not destroy. To my mother, her mountain-home appeared lovelier than ever, probably because she felt a presentiment that she was leaving it for ever.

While she was gazing on hill and lake and river, with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret, my father's quick eye detected the advance of a military rider. The sunbeams *glinted* from his helmet and steel scabbard, and announced him to be an orderly dragoon. On the approach of the carriage, the horseman pulled up, and taking a packet from his sabretash, delivered it to the major. Cæsar Blake broke the seal; the despatch merely contained a letter of congratulation from the commanding officer at Castlebar, and enclosed a newspaper. My father turned to the gazette; there his name appeared

as promoted to a lieutenant-colonelcy, with an appointment to the 5th regiment, then in India, but under orders for Europe. His gallantry at Castlebar, it appeared, had not been overlooked. General H—— made honourable mention of his services; and in consequence, he was restored to active service, with additional rank. His promotion, unsolicited and unexpected, was therefore doubly dear to a soldier's feelings; and with excusable pride, he announced it to his beautiful companion.

But the web of life is at best a tangled and party-coloured concern. While my father's eyes were sparkling with delight, he observed my mother's cheek grow pale, as the paper she had been looking over dropped from her powerless hand.

"Are you ill, dearest?" exclaimed the colonel eagerly. She could not reply, but pointed to a paragraph which had escaped his notice. He read it, and it announced her father's marriage.

This was indeed an unforeseen calamity, and many a cherished hope of future pardon was rudely annihilated. From Mr. Harrison's avow-

ed disinclination to enter a second time into matrimonial engagements, it was rather an act of vengeance and displeasure, than the result of fancy or free-will. He disliked woman's society; he feared a woman's thrall; he avowed those feelings, and for seventeen years had acted on their impulse. What now could change his sentiments, and remove prejudices which through life he fostered? The motive was too apparent—to cut from all hope of inheritance his offending daughter and her unborn offspring. My mother nearly sunk beneath the blow; but my father bore it manfully. Every exertion to cheer and console his gentle partner was tried, and his efforts were not without success.

It would appear that from contingent inheritances, fortune had determined to cut my father off. Manus Blake had been ten years a benedict, and no family had blessed his union. His brothers, next in remainder, were not likely from taste or profession to enter into wedlock. Great, then, was the gallant colonel's astonishment, when a letter from the lord of Castle Blake announced the happy tidings, that his lady was “as ladies wish to be.”

Time passed, my mother was safely confined, and I ushered into this "whirligig world." At the baptismal font I was, in presence of a score of Blakes, Burkes, Browns, and Bodkins, denominated "John." Both my grandsires rejoiced in this unpretending appellation; and which of the twain it was intended to honour, I never heard and never inquired. Well would it have been for me had any saint in the calendar been selected for my patron rather than the Baptist, and this my memoirs will prove.

In due time, Manus Blake's helpmate produced a boy; and, as Southey sings, "there was joy in Aztlan." Now, Manus venerated his father's memory, and the heir of Castle Blake was therefore designated by the same name that had already been bestowed on me.

If my baptism had been honoured by the heads of divers clans, and representatives from all the tribes, it may be well imagined what a momentous affair the christening of the heir of our ancient house was. All, kith kin and relations, even to the third and fourth generation, were bidden; and, of course, my parents were

duly summoned. My mother's health was not sufficiently established to permit her venturing from home, and the colonel was obliged to attend the ceremonial without her. Deeply he regretted it; and had it been possible to be absent without giving mortal offence to his kind-hearted brother, he would have excused himself. To go was unavoidable: with a heavy heart he bade his beloved Ellen an affectionate farewell, and set out with a presentiment of impending misfortune—for one whom he should avoid was there—the wife of his deadly enemy, and his quondam admirer, Harriette Kirwan. Little did Manus Blake anticipate the misery which his unconscious agency would bring about, when he invited his new neighbours, the Donovans, to meet his favourite brother.

The property to which Mr. Donovan had become accidentally the heir, adjoined the estates of Castle Blake; and shortly after his marriage, he came down with his beautiful bride to take a formal possession. Anxious as he was to obtain with his new acquirement a footing among the aristocracy, he knew that this was only to be effected through his wife's connexion with the

leading families. At first, he kept aloof from my uncle ; but speedily discovering that without his countenance, his assumed caste could not be maintained, he changed his tactics, and endeavoured to conciliate the lord of Castle Blake. In this his wife willingly assisted, and formal visitings had been interchanged before the rebellion exploded and Donovan joined the royalists in Castlebar.

There, undoubtedly, he had used sinister means to injure my father with the commanding officers ; but Cæsar Blake's unexpected adherence to the royal cause rendered any attempt to impeach his loyalty absurd. Donovan returned home a foiled and disappointed intriguer. With my father he could not compete openly ; and, with deep dissimulation, but unalterable hatred, he smothered his mortification as he best could, and determined to bring about a reconciliation, until time and accident would secure a safe but tedious revenge. Manus Blake, open and unsuspecting to a fault, was easily gained over ; he believed that all were sincere as himself, and freely offered his assistance to reconcile those who in love and

ambition had been rivals, and mediate between an artful scoundrel and an ingenuous and confiding brother.

The approaching solemnity afforded a good opportunity to heal the feud and re-establish friendly feelings. Donovan and his wife were accordingly invited to be present. By both the invitation was joyfully accepted. Different feelings influenced them ;—with Harriette, reviving love ; with her husband, undying hatred.

Already this ill-assorted couple had discovered that happiness attends no union heartless and hurried as their own. Donovan's vanity was flattered by the beauty of his wife—but beyond that, he had no tenderer feeling. With Harriette, a deep aversion, almost too powerful for concealment, succeeded the hour of madness which tempted her to give a hand to one whose character she despised, and whose person she detested. For a time, a gay equipage and showy ornaments amused her, while visiting and change of scene diverted an uneasy mind from thinking ; but these had ceased to interest : *ennui* came on, reflection maddened, and her passion for Cæsar Blake, indelicate, criminal,

and unholy, returned with additional violence, as if the obligations that bound them both increased it ; when even to think was unpardonable, and hope was at an end.

It was twilight when my father entered the ivy-covered archway of his paternal domain. March had come in with a lion's violence : the trees groaned in the storm—a deserted dog was howling mournfully—an owl flitted heavily past—and a hare crossed the avenue before him. Cæsar Blake would have been freer from superstition than his countrymen, had he regarded these ominous appearances and sounds without emotion. He spurred on rapidly, and at the hall-door met his brother and his ancient enemy returning from the stables.

Donovan anticipated an interview, and was well prepared for it. With apparent openness he at once entered into explanations ; and so artful was his address, that my father was cheated into a belief of his sincerity ; and, to all appearance, amity was renewed, and past differences forgotten.

Harriette, “ the married woman,” was first in the drawing-room, although the gallant

colonel had persuaded himself, that the business of the toilette would have made her the last to enter it. Their meeting, and their *tête-à-tête*, it is unnecessary to particularize. Cæsar thought his accomplished cousin had never looked so beautiful—while every smothered feeling in her breast rekindled with increasing violence. The omens that marked his journey were forgotten; he was excited, flattered, almost possessed, and circumstances, trifling in themselves, assisted. For the first time he wore a colonel's uniform; for the first time he heard his new title echoed in the gay festival. Caution, fear, and prudence were lulled to sleep; all around was gay and reckless merriment. The heir was in due form brought to the font; my father and the seductive Harriette were the sponsors; the holy rites were followed by the banquet; the wine flowed gloriously; music was heard in the hall; the dance succeeded; all was mirth and gallantry; and Ellen, the gentle, devoted, and adoring Ellen, was half-forgotten; and Harriette, all worthless as she was, usurped her place.

Reader, censure not Cæsar Blake too hastily;

let the wisest struggle with the temptation that assailed him, and let Platonists prate as they please, the stoutest resolution may fail, and even a philosopher discover that human nature is but weak; and, maugre the sophistries of schoolmen, “a man’s a man for a’ that !”

The night wore on; the happy parents of the heir appeared removed beyond the cares and sorrows of humanity. Donovan improved his advantage, and showed himself so solicitous to eradicate every latent spark of past unkindness, that my father began to fancy he had judged him with too much severity. Yet Donovan never hated Cæsar Blake with half the intensity before, that the admiration his wife lavished on his enemy elicited now. That very evening, a disgraced servant of the Blakes, whom he had taken into his service, in tipsy loquacity apprised him of what he had never known before; and he registered in heaven an oath of deadly vengeance. A blacker heart, a more tortured spirit than his, never occupied a human habitation: yet his laugh was loud, and he appeared the happiest of the happy. But while his manner exhibited well-

dissembled confidence and mental tranquillity, he watched with a tiger's patience every look and action of his doomed rival ; and, before the gay throng separated, he had seen enough to confirm his worst suspicions — his wife loved Cæsar Blake !

CHAPTER XIII.

GUILT AND MURDER.

Oh ! too convincing—dangerously dear,
 In woman's eye the unanswerable tear !
 That weapon of her weakness she can wield,
 To save, subdue—at once her spear and shield,
 Avoid it—Virtue ebbs and Wisdom errs,
 Too fondly gazing on that grief of hers !
 What lost a world, and bade a hero fly ?
 The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye.
 Yet be the soft triumvir's fault forgiven :
 By this, how many lose not earth, but heaven !
 Consign their souls to man's eternal foe,
 And seal their own, to spare some wanton's woe !

* * * * * *Corsair.*

Whose bullet through the night air sang,
 Too nearly, deadly aimed to err ?

Bride of Abydos.

THREE days passed, and hospitable rejoicings continued with unabated spirit, in honour of the long-denied blessing of an heir, which had now been vouchsafed to the lord of Castle Blake. Many of the guests remained; while those who

were obliged to leave, were succeeded by a fresh supply of visitors. My father had fixed the third morning for his departure; but a stag was to be enlarged, from whom a fine run was expected, and the colonel yielded to the earnest solicitation of his brother, and consented to extend his visit to another day.

On what trifles do the gravest occurrences of life depend! My father had promised faithfully that on this day he would be at Castlebar, and he had resolved to redeem the promise. Accordingly he combated the entreaties of his host, mounted his horse, and actually commenced his journey: but, unluckily, he cast a shoe, and stopped at a smith's shop to have it replaced. During this delay, the cart with the deer came up, attended by a numerous field. Again he was pressed to join the hunters; the prospect of a gallant run and the *badinage* of the company overturned his resolutions, and he consented.

There was also another departure from Castle Blake, and that was Mr. Donovan's. Business of moment called him to Galway. The distance was long, the roads heavy, and he left

with a declaration that he should not be home till next morning.

Cæsar Blake, when he changed his intention of returning, despatched his servant to apprise his lady. Ellen was anxiously expecting him ; she had dressed with unusual care ; and her baby's cot, gaily decorated with ever-blowing roses, was placed upon a sofa in the drawing-room. The day to her seemed interminably long ; she gazed upon the slumbering child, she looked at the progress of the time-piece : she went to the window, the shades of evening were falling fast ; and, as yet, her lord appeared not. Something had made her melancholy : she was still weak and nervous, it might be her husband's absence, it might be her father's marriage ; and her eyes filled as they turned upon the darling pledge of pure and hallowed love. Ah ! who can imagine a mother's feelings as she looks upon the first-born of an idolized father ?

“ How lovely he appears ! his little cheeks,
In their pure incarnation, vying with
The rose-leaves strewn beneath him.
And his lips, too,
How beautifully parted !

He smiles and sleeps ! Sleep on
And smile, thou little young inheritor
Of a world——Sleep on and smile !
Thine are the hours and days when both are cheering
And innocent ! Must the time
Come, thou shalt be amerced for sins unknown,
Which were not thine nor mine ? But now sleep on !—
His cheeks are reddening into deeper smiles,
And shining lids are trembling o'er his long
Lashes —
Half open, from beneath them, the clear blue
Laughs out, altho' in slumber. He must dream—
Of what ?—of Paradise ! Ay ! dream of it,
My disinherited boy ! 'Tis but a dream !”

“Hark ! a horse stops. It is himself, thy own loved father, boy !” and Ellen flew with open arms to meet him. Alas ! it was but the messenger to extinguish hope, deferred too long already.

The lights were blazing in Castle Blake, the dressing-bell had rung its second peal, and Harriette Donovan appeared in all the pride of beauty. Never had she looked lovelier, for never had she taken more pains to render her charms irresistible. She was dressed splendidly ; her magnificent black hair contrasting artfully with the string of pearls that secured it, while the sparkling necklace found its brilliancy eclipsed by

“Corruscations from a lightning eye.”

Her tall and voluptuous figure moved over the carpet with that natural grace that art attains not, as she sought the distant sofa where she observed her cousin. Dinner was announced. Harriette leaned upon my father's arm; and, "like a blooming eastern bride," occupied the next place at table.

Alas! Cæsar Blake, there is one at home, weeping over an infant's cradle, whose chaste and holy tear is worth all the "wreathed smiles" that ever played round the rosy lips of the dangerous beauty "who sits beside thee!"

That morning the deer had made a gallant run; the pace was severe, and those who had ridden hard now drank deep, and, gradually dropping off one by one, sought their respective dormitories, and the table was deserted long before the usual hour. The ladies, also, from the late revelry of the preceding night, were inclined to seek their pillows; soon, therefore, the drawing-room was deserted, Harriette disappeared, and my father retired to his chamber.

There he found a brilliant wood-fire sparkling in the hearth. He threw his coat aside, put on his dressing-gown, and with the in-

dolence that a hard ride induces, stretched himself luxuriously upon a sofa, in quiet, dreamy listlessness, gazing upon the ruddy blaze. He thought of Ellen, and his heart smote him. Was she awake? or was she dreaming of him? No—at that lone late hour she was kneeling before her God, imploring protection for a sleeping babe, and invoking blessings on an absent husband!

Cæsar Blake was slumbering; a smart ride, a free carouse, a brilliant wood-fire, lulled his faculties into repose, and in a state of half-unconsciousness, in fancy, he was with Ellen and his child. A lip was softly pressed to his! was it a dream? He unclosed his eyes, and Harriette Donovan, “the married woman,” was leaning in voluptuous *déshabille* over the sofa!

“Harriette!” he exclaimed, “is anything wrong? Have you not retired? why are you at this hour waking?”

“Waking! Cæsar—” she replied wildly, “how can one so wretched as I expect to sleep? I have lost you. You slighted, derided, and deserted me—and yet I love you—for I cannot subdue feelings that are unconquerable!”

“ Harriette, Harriette, this is madness !”

“ Madness you may call it, Cæsar, but I am not mad. I loved you, and you scorned me; I hated you, cursed you, and in an hour of rage threw my hand away upon a wretch whom I despise, detest, execrate! I cannot be your wife—I will be your page—your mistress—your menial; I will follow you, live with you, die for you; but, Cæsar, only love me; for without your love, life is not endurable !”

My father marked the wildness of her eye, and saw that she was fearfully agitated. The position in which he found himself was indeed alarming. “ Harriette,” he exclaimed, “ by Heaven! you will be the ruin of both! Leave me—for your own sake—for mine—for one’s who gave up home and father for me. I adjure you to leave this room—stay, and we are lost—we, and one beside who is guileless.”

She paused irresolutely—her eyes flashed lightnings. Was she again despised? The thought maddened, and her heart throbbed almost to bursting. There was a long pause. “ Yes—I *will leave you!* Cold, cruel, heartless

as you are—I cannot curse you, Cæsar,” and her wild looks softened and she melted into tears. “May *you* never feel the misery—the madness, that *I do*!” she almost fainted; she would have spoken, but her words found no utterance, while frequent sobs betrayed the inward storm that racked her bosom. My father could not witness such distress insensibly; his softer nature was touched—his weak, but human heart, gave way; he supported her in his arms—he placed her on the sofa—he brought her water—he talked and reasoned—and two o’clock found the erring fair one in his chamber.

“Harriette, farewell!” he said, as he pressed her to his heart; “May God forgive us!”

“Amen!” a deep revengeful voice responded, and Donovan stood in the door-way. He was dressed and armed. Presenting at my unfortunate father, at but three paces’ distance, he drew the trigger—the bullet took effect—and Cæsar Blake fell upon the floor mortally wounded!

A dreadful commotion ensued. Harriette,

the cause of all, fled shrieking to her chamber, while the murderer rushed down-stairs. His horse was waiting at the door ; and long before the horror-stricken household could comprehend the meaning of the alarm, the homicide was far beyond pursuit.

Accident brought on this tragedy. Donovan, unhappily, found little delay in Galway, and less difficulty in traversing the cross-roads than he anticipated when he left Castle Blake. In the evening he reached the intermediate town, in which he had purposed stopping ; but induced by the earliness of the hour, he determined to push forwards. His own apartment was in the same wing of the building in which that of Cæsar Blake was situated. The hour was late—all was quiet—but from one window a light appeared—and that was in the chamber of his enemy. What kept him waking ? He held his breath—dark suspicions crossed his mind—he gazed with starting eyes, and he saw a female form shadowed on the wall. Her arms were round the neck, her head was resting on the bosom of his enemy ! He rushed up-

stairs, opened his own chamber, and found it deserted !

The rest is known. His wife's infidelity was discovered; and Cæsar Blake fell a martyr to the feebleness of man's resolution, and the madness of woman's love !

CHAPTER XIV.

Fast from his breast the blood is bubbling—

* * * * *

He was thy hope—thy joy—thy love—thine all,
And that last thought on him thou couldst not save
Sufficed to kill ;

Burst forth in one wild cry, and all was still !

Bride of Abydos.

Five bits of lead,
Or three, or two, or one, send very far !

Don Juan.

THE consternation of the sleeping inmates of the castle, when awakened by the report of firearms and the loud outcries of the first domestics who entered the chamber of the dying man, is not to be described ; and never was there a wilder scene of tumult and horror than the house now presented. The shrieks of wo-

men, the imprecations of men, were everywhere heard, while some were calling for assistance, and others raving for revenge. Manus Blake, who had been among the foremost to reach the apartment of his unfortunate brother, raised him from the floor, and laid him gently on the bed. The surgeon of a dragoon regiment, who happened to be of the number of the guests, having cleared the chamber of the crowd, proceeded to examine my father's wound. A hasty inspection satisfied him that the injury was mortal, and one glance told Manus Blake that his favourite brother was doomed to fill an untimely grave. Expresses were sent off in various directions, additional surgical assistance procured, and the curate of the parish despatched to break the melancholy tidings to my mother, and convey her without delay to Castle Blake, to bid an eternal farewell to him in whom her every hope of earthly happiness centred.

It would be a useless and painful detail to describe the agony of grief with which my mother received the fatal news, though gently and gradually communicated. At times, during the melancholy journey, her faculties appeared to be

paralyzed by the excess of her misery ; and for miles she remained in stupid, silent astonishment, as if feeling and perception had been overwhelmed, and extinguished altogether. Then, as if suddenly awaking to a consciousness of her wretchedness, a fit of frenzy would succeed this mute and torpid apathy, venting itself in piercing shrieks, until, exhausted, she fainted in the arms of the clergyman and her female attendant.

It was during the wildest of these bursts of anguish, that a carriage was passing that which bore the hapless mourner to her husband's death-bed. The early travellers—for morning was but breaking—appeared impatient of delay, and, from the narrowness of the road, a momentary stop was necessary, to allow the vehicles to proceed without collision. The interruption was noticed by those within, and the blinds, which had been drawn down, were for an instant raised. Great God ! what must have been the feelings of her who occupied that gay equipage, as shriek succeeded shriek from the carriage that impeded her's ? That frantic mourner was the woman whose happiness she

had blasted—her whom she widowed—whose babe she made an orphan—for the early traveller was Harriette Donovan, hurrying from the scene of misery and blood which her unholy love had caused.

When the fatal decision of the surgeon was communicated to Cæsar Blake, he bore it with manly resignation. At his earnest request, the room was cleared of all except his brother and a clergyman, who had hastened to offer spiritual consolation to the dying soldier. What passed was never known, farther than that the wounded man consigned his wife and child to his brother's protection, and exacted a solemn promise that no vindictive proceedings should be pursued against his murderer. The interview was long and melancholy; and when the surgeons were again admitted, Manus Blake exhibited tokens of the deepest sorrow, while the minister of peace was totally unmanned. The night wore through; morning broke; momentarily Cæsar Blake became feebler; it was evident to all, that the hour of dissolution was approaching, and it became questionable whether the fading spark would hold out much

longer, and enable the drooping soldier to take his last farewell of one, on whom, even amid the agonies of a painful departure, all his thoughts turned.

“Manus,” said my father, in a feeble voice, “has morning dawned sufficiently to permit you to see the gate?”

“Yes, my dearest brother; compose yourself, Ellen will soon be here.”

“Would that she were!” replied the dying man. “*Remember*, Manus—you know my last wish, and you will be all to my poor wife and my orphan child?”

“They shall be dear to me as a cherished sister and as an only boy!” and the iron nerves of my uncle could not control his emotions, while big tears stole down his manly cheek.

“Enough!” said my father, “I die contented. Oh, Ellen! could I but breathe my last sigh upon thy bosom—couldst thou but listen to my dying words, invoking blessings on thee and thy poor boy!”

“Compose yourself, dearest Cæsar, Ellen will be here immediately;” and a slight confusion in the chamber announced the expected

arrival. The mourner's carriage had entered the grand entrance, and was seen at a rapid pace proceeding down the avenue.

It was well for the poor sufferer that she was insensible to everything around, or the present fearful visit would have formed a dreadful contrast to that joyous evening on which she first entered the portal of Castle Blake. The stopping of the carriage partially recalled her memory, and she wildly inquired "where she was?" But when the lofty figure of Manus Blake presented itself, his features marked with intense grief, every fear was realized—the full consciousness of misery returned—she uttered a piercing and sustained shriek of anguish, that reached the chamber of the dying man, and told that she was now painfully alive to the extent of her wretchedness.

Willingly would I pass over the scene that followed. They carried her up-stairs—they placed her beside her departing husband—her lips were laid to his, and a wild despairing glance fixed upon that fading eye which never had turned upon her with any but a look of love. "Ellen!" said a voice so feeble as to be

heard with difficulty, "I am going—fast—
God bless—"

The surgeon held the wrist of the arm which was extended over the bed-coverings, and made a mute sign that my mother should be removed—Cæsar Blake's last sigh had parted!

"It is over!" said the churchman, raising his glistening eyes. "Into thy hands, Father, we commend him!"

"What!" screamed the wild voice of the mourner—"Who says he's dead? It's false!" Nor indeed did the departed soldier bear the semblance of an extinguished spirit.

"He seem'd to sleep, for you could scarcely tell
(As he bled inwardly, no hideous river
Of gore divulged the cause) that he was dead."

"Speak to me!" she continued—"Speak to Ellen, my own darling adored husband! Ha! he does not hear me!" she laid her lips to his; "I feel no breath;—Cæsar, speak! He is *dead!*" and in violent convulsions she sank upon the senseless body.

I must hurry the detail. All that human skill could do was done. While strength remained, shrieks and groans, that would have

harrowed a marble breast to listen to, were heard from my mother's chamber; convulsions succeeded each other quickly, and during one of the most severe, a vessel in the head ruptured. Ellen's sufferings were mercifully ended; and before the remains of Cæsar Blake were cold, his wife lay at his side a corpse, and *I* was made an orphan!

* * * * *

This frightful tragedy occasioned a powerful sensation: the sympathies of all classes were excited—all execrated the deed, all denounced the murderer; and, as a last token of respect, while the bodies were being waked, the castle was thronged by crowds of sincere mourners. On the day of the funeral, every road and height was covered with countless multitudes, and twenty thousand persons witnessed the melancholy ceremony.

When the coffins were extended side by side in the church-aisle, and the beautiful service for the dead was being performed, the simple inscriptions on the plates pointed a striking lesson of the insecurity of mortal life and human happiness. “Lieutenant-colonel Cæsar Blake, aged

28 years !”—And was that heap of clay the proud, and chivalrous, and gallant soldier ? Short was his career ! The scroll upon the lesser lid was as laconic — “ Dame Ellinor Blake, aged 19.” Great God ! brief was the space vouchsafed to one so fair and young and innocent !

The bodies were consigned to the tomb—“ dust to dust ” was spoken—and the earth rattled hollowly above the dead soldier and his wife ! Amid tears and lamentations the grave was filled—the crowd were beginning to disperse—and the last sod was smoothed over “ the narrow house.” There was a momentary silence, while all looked with full hearts and fuller eyes on the little mound that covered “ the brave and beautiful.”

Just then a youthful stranger issued from the crowd, and gazed for an instant on the double grave. He knelt and kissed the turf, plucked a few blades from the herbage, and in a voice clear and distinct enough to be overheard by hundreds, exclaimed, “ Cæsar Blake ! before this tuft of grass is withered, your murderer shall fill as red a grave as this ! ” Turning

from the spot, he disappeared among the dense multitude.

“ Who is he ? ” asked many voices. None answered—for none knew.

* * * * * *
* * * * * *

A month passed ; the assizes were at hand, and Mr. Donovan who had absconded, on learning what the dying request of his victim had been, determined to come in and risk a trial. Had a rigorous prosecution been anticipated, he would not have hazarded this step ; but, well assured that vindictive measures were not meditated by the relatives of the deceased, he was aware that by a proper application of money, all contingent chances of a conviction would be evaded. He subsidized accordingly the sub-sheriff—a jury was prepared—and the prisoner was arraigned, tried, and acquitted.

And yet Donovan’s escape was very critical. The injunctions of a dying brother to Manus Blake were sacred, and therefore he took no steps to ensure a conviction of the murderer ; while the prisoner secured a powerful bar, a

venal sheriff, and a packed jury, and the latter saved him.

The evidence was heard; the judge summed up, and charged unfavourably for the traverser. *Ten* of the jury were unanimous to find him guilty—*two* were for an acquittal; and these were professional *boot-eaters*.*

“ ‘There is nothing like leather,’ says an old moral; and in Peter Donovan’s case it was a proven truism. The jury for two long days and nights remained secluded. The ten for a conviction were “good men and true,” but the *leather-cutters* were far more efficient—for they had entered the box regularly provisioned for the nonce, a precaution which their brethren had unhappily neglected. Jurymen cannot live on air, and the conclusion may be guessed; the *two* held out—the *ten* gave in—and Donovan was acquitted.

Consummate as that scoundrel’s audacity was, he felt himself too happy in stealing from

* In the kingdom of Connaught, a boot eater meaneth a gentleman who enters a jury-box with his verdict ready for delivery; nor will he, from evidence or any other cause, alter the same, even though obliged “to eat his own boots.”

the assize-town unobserved. Swagger and impudence were unavailing now : the timid turned from him with aversion, and the bolder took no trouble to conceal their abhorrence. This was sufficiently annoying ; but the truculent looks and muttered curses of the peasantry alarmed him far more. He perceived that his life was insecure ; and he determined to leave the country for a time, until the storm blew over, and popular indignation should subside. Leaving the town at midnight, he reached his miserable home without any interruption ; and, among low followers and broken sycophants, vainly strove to forget that blood was upon his hands.

Still, even here, he heard enough to make him anxious to expedite his departure : his tenantry were driven from the fairs ; his servants insulted in the market-town ; every post brought him threatening letters ; and his own domain—and he never left it—was now deemed insecure. His arrangements were completed, and the next day he was to leave the neighbourhood, and seek safety in another land.

He sate at his own table ; a low attorney,

a dependant kinsman, the blackguards who had acquitted him, and two or three broken-down spendthrifts, formed fitting guests for a murderer's board.

In imitation of ancient houses, Donovan had retained a harper. To one naturally unmusical, having no ancestral recollections to wed him to half-forgotten usages, the presence of the bard was tolerated from vanity alone. To-night, the tunes he played were unhappily selected, and the names and melodies unsuited to the temper of the master of the house ; and the old man was rudely dismissed from a board where music had no charms, and wine alone could produce a simulated mirth, which, when the lip smiles, cannot prevent the breast from sighing.

A heartless effort at hilarity vanishes at the most trifling annoyance. Donovan had lost a favourite dog, and a considerable reward was offered, but in vain, for his recovery. That evening the head of the poor animal was affixed to his gate, and a scroll attached to it, declaring that a similar fate awaited the owner before another week would pass. No wonder the part-

ing revelry was clouded by gloomy forebodings, and that the smile was forced, and the jest a mockery. The hour of separation was near; all had drunk deeply; for, to drown remorse, Donovan himself had latterly resorted to the bottle.

“ We must cancel that will, Hawkins,” he said: “ Like every other new-married fool, I was bewitched, and, to cut off my next relation whom I hate, left every acre to that infernal woman.” The attorney assented. “ Poison every inch of the mearings; and if Blake’s hounds attempt to draw a cover within miles, he may send a cart for their carcasses.” The dependant nodded obedience. “ And now for bed, boys, for I must be astir by cockerow.”

“ Not till we have one glorious round !” exclaimed a ruined blackleg. “ Fill, every man of ye. This is our host: long life to him! give him a full bumper !”

The party were seated in a back-room that looked into an enclosed garden. From its greater security, this apartment had been of late the favourite chamber of Donovan. The shutters were but partially closed; and the young moon, glancing in, was sometimes seen

and sometimes hidden, for the night was boisterous and cloudy. The glasses were filled to the brim—the company rose to drink the toast with fitting honours, and the name of Donovan was on every lip. Suddenly the attorney pointed to the casement.

“What’s that?” asked the host, with all the quickness of intuitive suspicion.

“It was only fancy,” returned the man of law; “I thought I saw a human countenance peeping through the window there. It must have been the shadow of Miles Dogherty.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Donovan, as he looked round. “That stupid scoundrel of a servant always neglects to close the shutters: not that we need fear intruders here, for the garden-wall is twenty feet high.”

“Phoo!” said the boot-eater, “the devil himself could not get over that.”

“We may as well, however, close the windows,” said Donovan; and, stepping forward, he laid his hand upon the shutter. He started instantly. “By Heaven!” he exclaimed, “there is a man outside! Who’s there?”

“*The avenger of Cæsar Blake!*” returned a

voice that harrowed all that heard it. The words were scarcely uttered, when a close explosion shook the room; splintered glass flew across the table; and Donovan made one backward step, and fell heavily on the carpet. In rushed the servants; they raised their master—he was a dead man, for several bullets had ruptured the heart and divided the spine. Uproar and confusion ensued. After some delay, the garden was searched, for none of the guests wished to beard the murderer; but none was found; and the avenger of Cæsar Blake remained undiscovered.

CHAPTER XV.

MY BOYHOOD.—MRS. BLAKE CASEY.

Miss Hoyden.—His honour desires you'll be so kind as to let us be married to-morrow.

Young Fashion.—To-morrow ! No, no ; 'tis now, this very hour, I would have the ceremony performed.

Miss Hoyden.—'Ecod ! with all my heart.

Trip to Scarborough.

Oh ye ! who teach the ingenuous youth of nations,
Holland, France, England, Germany, or Spain,
I pray ye flog them upon all occasions,
It mends their morals ; never mind the pain.

Don Juan.

I WAS removed to Castle Blake, and placed in my aunt's nursery. Never was orphan more tenderly attended to, and never a dying pledge more faithfully redeemed, than that made by Manus Blake to my deceased parent. Attached as my uncle was to his long-expected heir, I seemed to be equally regarded. We were

brought up like twin-brothers, and our names were not more similar than our persons.

And yet my blundering relative injured me from the very cradle. He not only neglected to communicate my mother's death to Mr. Harrison; but when a letter was received from that singular personage, stating that he had seen the melancholy affair reported in the papers, and offering his protection to me, Manus, irritated at some passage in the epistle, that he imagined reflected on his brother's character, transmitted in reply a thundering philippic, so ingeniously worded as to sting my grandfather to the quick, and smother every reviving spark of natural affection.

The records of infancy are not very interesting, nor are they of much importance to society at large, save in poetical biographies, when it is desirable to ascertain, if possible, by a stop-watch, the precise period when the first "lisp in numbers" can be authenticated. The history of a boyhood is not more valuable, excepting when the chronicled one slips off antecedent to his seventh year, a paragon of precocious piety, and leaving 'sayings and doings' sufficient for a

saintly annual or methodist magazine. Indeed, boys in good health are in propensities and pursuits pretty similar ; and in the kingdom of Connaught the course of education generally adopted is nearly the same. There they whip tops, and are whipped in turn ; break windows and worry cats ; learn to ride and read ; are taught card-playing and their catechism ; and so gradually improve, until in due time they shoot flying and kiss the nursemaids. Now my cousin and myself were no exceptions to “ingenuous youth,” only that Jack possessed more animal spirits, with a finer development of the organ of destructiveness. Father Roger Dowling, who confessed my aunt and superintended our education, could occasionally manage to keep me for an hour to my “humanities ;” while Jack, unless strapped to the table, would not remain steady for a second ; and for every window that I broke, he smashed twenty. Indeed Father Roger declared, “that were I removed from the evil influence and example of my kinsman, I was the making of as nate a scholar as ever thumbed a dictionary ; but Jack, might the Lord mend

him !—he, Roger, had taught two generations, and finished in less than no time sundry gentlemen whom he enumerated, and who, when they came under his tutelage, hardly knew a B from a bull's foot : but Jack bate Bannagher, and would vex a saint even were he loaded with psalm-books.”

We passed our thirteenth year, and still were at the feet of Father Roger. I wrote tolerably, and read Virgil. Jack was an execrable scribe, and knew as much of the Mantuan bard as he did of the author of Junius ; but he was not deficient in other accomplishments. He shot well, rode dashingly, tied flies, cropped terriers, and, as Tony Joyce the huntsman averred, was a most promising youth, provided they did not “ smother him with larning.” “ If he was intended for a priest, it was right enough ; but for a gentleman, and he too the head of the Blakes, what had he to do with books and balderdash ? He, Tony, wished he might only fill his grandfather's shoes, for he indeed was an honour to the name ; and sure all the world knew that Ulick Blake was but a marksman.” Father Roger, however, was not so sanguine

touching his pupil's future career.—“ He trusted he might be astray, and that Jack would come to a dacent end ; but he, Roger, could not forget Kit Costello, who was hanged at Ennis for shooting the sub-sheriff—and Jack Blake was as like Kit Costello in every turn as one pea was to another.”

Whether it was that the eternal jeremiads of the confessor began to alarm Manus and his lady, certain it is that a public school was decided upon as the proper place to give Jack and me the last polish. “ It was hard too,” they admitted, “ to part with such promising boys. They had no harm in their hearts, and young blood was warm.” This consideration might have saved us from a probation of light food and heavy flogging at the academy of Loughrea ; but while our fate was in the balance, an unforeseen accident occurred that consigned us to Doctor Bircham.

It so happened that Manus Blake had a female relative, who bore the plebeian surname of Casey. To do the good lady common justice, she did all she could to render it palatable to “ ears polite,” by affixing her maiden appella-

tion; and hence, her letters were addressed and her cards engraven, "Mrs. Blake Casey." Now the defunct Casey in name and calling was equally unaristocratic, for he had been a tailor. In one of his periodical incursions into the kingdom of Connaught, on the forlorn-hope of collecting "monies due," Providence—for marriages it is allowed are made in heaven—ordained that he should travel *tête-à-tête* in the Roscrea stage with Miss Honoria Blake. She was a stout gentlewoman and rather past maturity; and, as it turned out, never did two persons embark in the same vehicle on more unchristian terms with mankind than Honoria Blake and Jeremiah Casey aforesaid.

The lady was returning from a Blazer ball; and though, at first sight, she might have appeared rather corpulent for a "coryphee," nevertheless she delighted in country-dancing, and there was not a catch-weight in Galway more enduring, take her either at reel or jig. Imagine her indignation, when, on the preceding night, she had been permitted to overlook a whist-table. Those on whom she had a legitimate claim were too drunk to stand; those

who were not, left her to sit unheeded. None claimed "her soft hand;" and her figured muslin, its first appearance upon any stage, was never allowed to rustle down the middle!

Nor was Jeremiah Casey in happier mood. Every year his customers became more dilatory; and it appeared to him, that in Connaught, by a general consent, payments were to be procrastinated to the day of judgment.

Jerry had scoured the country from cock-crow to curfew, Of his numerous correspondents, sundry were sick, and divers invisible; one man was absent at a fox-hunt, another had bolted with his neighbour's wife, and those who favoured him with an interview were not more satisfactory. One, whom he had furnished with a bridal outfit, threatened him with instant death for recalling the event, and thereby wounding his feelings, as his lady had left him in a fortnight. Another generously offered to accept at six months for two hundred, provided Jerry handed over the balance, being eighty-four pounds, six shillings, and four-pence, upon the spot. Mr. Bodkin had been cleaned out at the Curragh, and Mr. M'Dermott re-

quested he would oblige him by discounting a bill. Mr. Kirwan was anxious to know on what night the Westport mail was robbed, as that event must have occurred, and himself suspected to have been present and *particeps criminis*, or he, Jerry, never would have the assurance to demand money from him at that time of the year. Mr. Burke felt offended at the indelicacy of the application, as, but five years before, he had actually paid him, Jerry, fifty pounds: and Mr. Donnelan trusted the tenants would not hear he was a tailor, and from Dublin; he, Donnelan, wished him well, and feared, if discovered, that he could not save his life. In one house, he found the lower windows built up, as the occupant had quarrelled with the coroner. At another, even before he could announce his name, he was covered with a blunderbuss from the attic, and obliged to abscond with as much rapidity as if he had committed a felony. In short, Jeremiah Casey was returning a sadder, but not a richer man, than when he crossed the Shannon; and had half determined, like Mr. Daniel O'Connell, to "register a vow in heaven," never during the

remainder of his natural life to apply shears to broadcloth for any customer westward of the bridge of Athlone.

Woman is an uncertain article; and so says every man who has passed five-and-twenty. Some of them are won in smiles, and others are best wooed when sulky. I know not what tempted Jerry Casey, when driven desperate by bad debts, to then begin thinking about matrimony; nor why Honor Blake, when at war with all the sex, should condescend to vow submission to a fraction of humanity. But Jerry was rich as a Jew; Honor living on sufferance with her clan, even unto the third and fourth generation. The result was, that after a courtship "short, sharp, and decisive," Honor Blake was united to Jeremiah Casey; and so said all the newspapers.

There was dire commotion among *the tribes*, when it was announced that one of "the ould stock" had committed matrimony with a tailor. But this indignation was deep, not loud. In the alphabet of Jerry's ledger the names of the complainants were awfully recorded. Though he, good easy man, might be trifled with, his

lady, if roused, would probably exhibit different feelings. Quickly and quietly the indignity was forgotten; one by one, the kindred of Mrs. Casey condescended to drop in at dinner-time; Usher's Quay was convenient to the Four Courts; Jerry was "a dacent poor devil after all;" his port was sound—his *pot-luck* not amiss; and before the honeymoon had waned her horns, Blakes, Burkes, and Bodkins united legs under Mrs. Casey's mahogany.

So matters sped. Five years passed; and Jerry was called to his account, and slept with his fathers—if he had any such. He surfeited himself, poor man!—for he was a true Catholic—with eggs and bacon, after a black Lent, on an Easter Sunday; and Mrs. Casey found herself a disconsolate widow, having forty thousand pounds in government stock, divers houses in the city, an annuity of five hundred pounds, and Connaught securities sufficient to fill a travelling trunk.

Without loss of time, the relict of the departed tailor cut the Quay, engaged a newly-furnished house, exchanged Jerry's "one-horse chay" for a chariot built to order by Hutton;

and a brass-plate, large enough for a dentist, appeared on the door of No. 21, Merrion-square, bearing the name of "MRS. BLAKE CASEY," and underneath, in smaller letters, "*knock and ring.*"

Then it was, that by every post letters of condolence came pouring in. Natural affection, of course, excited the sympathies of Mrs. Casey's numerous connexions; but it was hinted that other causes assisted. Jerry's books had been handed over to Messrs. Sharp and Sweepall; and they had circularized Connaught, hoping, with equal politeness and sincerity, that all debts due to the late Jeremiah Casey *Esquire* would be directly discharged, and they, Sharp and Sweepall, saved the very disagreeable duty of enforcing immediate payment of the same.

My uncle Manus was nearest blood-relation to the afflicted widow. He had survived all his brothers. The captain was killed at Trafalgar, in command of a Spanish seventy-four; and the brigadier assassinated in the streets of Dresden, about a love affair which his blundering management had eclated. Consequently

Manus was nearest and most natural heir to Honor Casey. He and the lady were therefore, in due time, formally reconciled; and, in proof of renewed amity, she accepted an invitation to Castle Blake, and set off for said place, in great distress of mind, and a new carriage.

Great were the preparations to give an honourable reception to Mrs. Blake Casey; and expectation was on tiptoe to see how the wealthy widow bore her good luck. Five o'clock struck, and a yellow chariot with four post-horses rolled under the grand gateway, and Jack and I ensconced ourselves in a convenient window, to command a good view of the important visiter.

On the box, a priggish-looking footman, in deep mourning and worsted epaulettes, sate beside the lady's-maid. From a hasty inspection of his legs, Jack decided that he had been a favourite disciple of the departed tailor. On his knee he carried a large cage, in which a green parrot was deposited; and a worse disposed bird never crossed the line. Within, the widow sate in state, with an asthmatic poodle

her companion. Trunks, boxes, and imperials were in and about the vehicle in such abundance, that had Jerry not been in purgatory, or heaven*—for, as he levanted at the end of a strict Lent, his probation for short measures and long charges might have been abridged—one might believe that therein was contained a fresh outfit for every customer in the county.

We described Honor Blake to be a stout gentlewoman, and I was prepared to see a portly personage debark; but when she essayed it, a mountain of flesh endeavoured to extricate itself, as, by a flank movement, she attempted to clear the carriage-door. Mrs. Casey had indeed become a monster; and as she clomb the steps with Manus Blake's assistance, her figure was so absurd, that my friend Jack sat down upon the carpet, to laugh with more convenience to himself.

It will be hardly necessary to observe that

* In the kingdom of Connaught, it is universally believed that tailors and musicians after death are cantoned in a place called "Fiddler's-green." As it is not marked on any map of Arrowsmith, I cannot describe its precise situation further than that report places it unpleasantly contiguous to Pandemonium.

Mrs. Casey and her suite were fully as troublesome as could be expected. Before they had passed a week in Castle Blake, they hated all therein, and received an honest return. Father Roger hoped there was no sin in wishing Mrs. C. safe in heaven ; while the prayers of Denis O'Brien—who since my father's death had become chief butler to my uncle—would have sent her in an opposite direction. Nor was the lady's establishment more fortunate in gaining the regard of the household. The maid was a verjuiced spinster, too old to love herself, and too ill-natured to look on. The footman was a regular snip ; and from the configuration of his limbs, had obtained from the servants the surname of *Giblets* ; the poodle was a nuisance, and the parrot had nearly bitten off my aunt's finger.

Between Jack and the entire set, a secret but deadly war was raging. He persecuted the spinster ; put Giblets on a vicious horse, which his bones were bruised, and his life endangered ; trod, on all safe occasions, upon the poodle's tail, and kept the parrot in such eternal irritation, that Mother Casey

herself dared not take a liberty with the offended bird. It is not marvellous, all things considered, that the visit should come to an untimely close ; and so it did.

We have already described the great difficulty that Mrs. Casey experienced in depositing her person in a carriage, and also in extricating it from the same. Now, my aunt had a low four-wheeled chair, in which she occasionally drove over the demesne ; and, as it afforded facilities to Mrs. Casey, which her own vehicle possessed not, she more than once had used it for an airing. One fine morning she determined on a drive, and Jack was despatched to order my aunt's chair. On his return, he overheard Manus Blake and Mrs. Casey holding a cabinet council, very imprudently, with open doors. Jack listened ; his own name was pronounced, and there was little in the manner which could occasion personal vanity. Mrs. Casey, having premised that what she said was from family affection, although it distressed her to do so ; but she could not conceal the truth ; the boys were on the road to ruin, and nothing could save them but a strict public school ;

and she concluded by earnestly recommending Doctor Bircham's.

Now, Jack had a horror of schools in general, and Bircham flogged with the left hand, and was reputed the hardest hitter that ever operated on a delinquent. Indeed, his establishment was a sort of purgatory for juvenile offenders, and the name of Bircham carried terror to the most desperate. Judge, then, Jack's consternation, when his father willingly consented, and named an early day for our departure.

Jack, I regret to say, never evinced that meek and christian disposition which delighteth in repaying evil with good. He vowed vengeance against Mother Casey, and all appertaining to her; and, to use parliamentary language, he lost no time in redeeming his pledge.

The wheels of my aunt's chair grated on the gravel, and Mrs. Casey, as the day was fine, notified her intention of taking all her favourites along with her; cloaks, shawls, and umbrellas were put in, and so were the maid, the poodle, and the parrot. The stout gentlewoman ascended next, Manus Blake aiding and

assisting ; Giblets perched himself on the hind carriage, and off this precious party trundled.

But short was their excursion. Before the vehicle proceeded fifty yards, off came a hind wheel, and out came the company ! A desperate outcry apprised Manus Blake of the accident : he looked, and there saw Giblets over his honoured mistress, and the poodle under her : the parrot had secured the maid's finger ; and cloaks, cushions, and cage, formed a general wreck.

Promptly they were succoured : Mother Casey was carried to the house, and brought about by the usual restoratives, brandy and burnt feathers. The favourites had suffered severely ; the poodle was lame—the maid's finger less by the nail — Giblets frightened to death — and the parrot bereaved of tail and topping. Well was it for all that the fatal cause of this capsize remained unknown : Jack had privately purloined the linch-pin, and no wonder that the wheel followed it.

Yet dark suspicions haunted Mrs. Casey. The luckless vehicle belonged to Manus Blake, and Manus Blake was her next heir. The

maid whispered doubtingly, and Giblets dropped mysterious hints. Deeper and deeper grew suspicion ; and on the third day, and with brief ceremony, Mrs. Blake Casey moved off, “ bag and baggage.”

But, alas ! the mischief was done, the decree had gone forth, and Jack and I were consigned to Doctor Bircham. We departed for Loughrea with heavy hearts—and Heaven knows ! we had good reason. Fame had only done the doctor justice ; for, never since the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew, were poor devils flayed as we were.

Three years passed ; the breach between Manus and his kinswoman was widened by the ingenuity of Giblets and the maid, until all communication ceased by mutual consent between the lord of Castle Blake and the relict of Jeremiah Casey Esquire. Jack and I continued under the tutorage of Dr. Bircham, and indeed, that left-handed professor sustained his well-earned reputation on our proper persons.

At last the joyful hour arrived that emancipated us from his thrall. Jack, being destined for the woolsack, was despatched to the Dublin

University ; and how he got entrance remains a mystery. I, like my poor father, was deemed fit food for gunpowder, and gazetted to an ensigncy ; and, with a good horse, a gentlemanly kit, fifty guineas in my pocket, and as light a heart as ever bounded at “ tuck of drum,” I set out for the good town of Drogheda, to learn the art of war, and carry the regimental colours of the —— Militia.

END OF VOL. I.

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